

## WORSHIP AT HOME

Sunday 6 December 2020

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent

### Gathering Prayer:

Lord, as we gather here today,  
we continue to watch for you.  
Be in our watching and our waiting,  
our speaking and our listening,  
our coming in and our going out.  
Lord, as we gather here today,  
we continue to watch for you. Amen.

**Hymn:** Long ago, prophets knew (StF 178)

Long ago, prophets knew  
Christ would come, born a Jew,  
come to make all things new;  
bear his people's burden, freely love and pardon:

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
*Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
*When he comes, when he comes,*  
*who will make him welcome?*

God in time, God in man,  
this is God's timeless plan:  
he will come, as a man,  
born himself of woman, God divinely human:

*Ring, bells, ring.....*

Mary, hail! Though afraid,  
she believed, she obeyed.  
In her womb, God is laid;  
till the time expected, nurtured and protected:

*Ring, bells, ring.....*

Journey ends! Where afar  
Bethlem shines, like a star,  
stable door stands ajar.  
Unborn Son of Mary, Saviour, do not tarry!

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!*  
*Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!*  
*Jesus comes! Jesus comes!*  
*We will make him welcome!*

*Written by Fred Pratt Green (1903 - 2000)*

### Prayer:

Lord, we have heard your call, coming from  
strange places. We have received your gift, calling

us into unexpected  
connections. We have  
been nurtured by your  
invitation, making  
friendships along the  
way. We approach you  
now with humble hearts  
and expectation, knowing you welcome all –  
stranger and friend.



But God of Advent, we confess that we have been  
reluctant to speak out your message of hope,  
and to live out your promise of salvation. Give us  
the generosity of heart and the wisdom of spirit  
to be your messengers in your world today,  
that others may know that you love them  
and call them closer to you.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer** - Our Father.....Amen

### Today's Readings:

Mark 1 v 1 – 8

2 Peter 3 v 8 – 15a

### Reflection:

In contrast to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke,  
Mark's Gospel doesn't start with the birth of  
Jesus. It starts with the preparatory work being  
done by John the Baptist. In today's world there  
are many examples of preparatory work needing  
to be done before things can really start, like  
preparing the ground for planting or filling the  
holes in a wall before decorating. John was  
preparing the people for the start of Jesus'  
teaching.

In 2020 how are you preparing for Christmas?  
Have you finished your shopping, written your  
cards or put the decorations up yet? Have you got  
an advent calendar? I have but I never have a  
chocolate one as Christmas for me isn't about  
chocolate, it's about counting down to the  
celebration of Jesus's birth. This year I have a  
charity one – it cost me more to buy but each day  
£1 is donated to a different charity on my behalf

and I don't know which charity until I open the door.

Today's readings don't talk of preparing for Christmas by buying presents, writing cards and decorating trees, they talk of preparing by cleansing and refining ourselves, repenting and turning to Christ and working for him. We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, rather we should live with the realisation that time is short and we have important work to do for God. We don't know when Christ will return but we live in eager expectation of his coming. If we ask ourselves what we would like to be doing when He does return, that is how we should be living each day today.

John offered a way to remove obstacles and to truly repent by focussing on God. In essence the leaders of the time were upstaged by a desert prophet from rural Judea. God chose to speak through an outsider who has gone down in history as greater than any of the rulers of his day. So often we judge people by our culture's standards – power, wealth, beauty – and we miss the truly great people through whom God works. Ultimately greatness is not measured by what you have, but by your faith in God.

My challenge to all of us this advent is to rewrite that Christmas to do list to include more of the things Christ encourages like prayer, Bible study, charity support, working for justice and helping our neighbours. To live, like John, and completely give ourselves over to God's will, to strive to be more like Christ and to always be ready for his return.

**Prayer:**

Eternal God, we pray for all who feel lost and afraid in a wilderness: those separated from their family or a long way from home; may they know the joy of reunion, and the touch of those they love.

We pray for those lost in the dangerous wilderness of addiction; may they know the joy of healing and the wonder of being loved.

We pray for those who have found beauty in the wilderness experience; those who found strength they didn't know they had – a closeness to you they didn't know they could experience.

We pray for one another, that when the wilderness threatens our faith and our security, we would find our safety, and our home, in Jesus – in whose name we pray. Amen.

**Hymn: Make way, make way (StF 264)**

Make way, make way, for Christ the King  
in splendour arrives;  
fling wide the gates and welcome him  
into your lives.

*Make way (Make way), make way (make way),  
for the King of kings (for the King of kings);  
make way (make way), make way (make way),  
and let his Kingdom in.*

He comes the broken hearts to heal,  
the prisoners to free;  
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,  
the blind shall see.

*Make way (Make way) .....*

And those who mourn with heavy hearts,  
who weep and sigh,  
with laughter, joy and royal crown  
he'll beautify.

*Make way (Make way) .....*

We call you now to worship him  
as Lord of all,  
to have no gods before him,  
their thrones must fall!

*Make way (Make way) .....*

*Written by Graham Kendrick (Born 1950)*

**Blessing:**

Advent God, we are your messengers:  
sent – like John – to prepare the way for your  
coming. As we go about, may we herald in words  
and actions your healing and forgiveness. Amen.

**WORSHIP AT HOME**  
**SUNDAY 13th December 2020**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent**

**Call to Worship**

The Lord is good to those who look to him, to anyone who seeks him; it is good to wait in patience for deliverance by the Lord.

*Lamentations 3:25&26*

**HYMN On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry  
Announces that the Lord is nigh;  
Awake and hearken, for he brings  
Glad tidings from the King of Kings!

Then cleansed be every life from sin;  
Make straight the way for God within,  
And let us all our hearts prepare  
For Christ to come and enter there.

For you are our salvation, Lord,  
Our refuge, and our great reward;  
Without your grace we waste away  
Like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick, stretch out your hand,  
And bid the fallen sinner stand;  
Shine forth, and let your light restore  
Earth's own true loveliness once more.

To God the Son all glory be  
Whose advent sets his people free,  
Whom, with the Father, we adore,  
And Holy Spirit, evermore.

*StF – 182 John Chandler (1806-1876)*

**Prayer**

Living God, we praise you come before you in praise and thanksgiving, praising you:

for every servant of yours who has spoken out truly and courageously, and ventured into dangerous places and difficult situations, to open up truth and to create peace and justice;

for those who led the way for Jesus Christ those through whom he saw and recognised your love and power at work in his own life – as today especially, with think of the life, witness and courage of John the Baptist;

for all those who, through the Christian centuries have shared Christ's love and suffering, and have triumphed through their trials;

Father, make us like them;  
keep us true to the truth we  
have been taught; faithful  
and courageous; loving and  
generous,  
and though we may be hurt,  
and often afraid of the  
consequences, let us too,  
triumph in our trials, in the name of him who  
loved us, Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us  
when to pray, saying, "Our Father, who art in  
heaven..... Amen"



**Bible Reading:**

John 1:6-8; 19-28

**Reflection**

Whilst I'm not bragging, some of you might want to believe that I am an authority and expert on such topics as: football; golf; music; and even the Bible, but I do know that I'm no literary expert (even if I have just finished reading 'War and Peace') and although my knowledge of Shakespeare is very limited, I do know that in one of his plays, a ghost spoiled a party – Banquo's ghost it was, that ruined the party in Macbeth! Similarly, Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee at the time of Jesus, threw a party, and it was John the Baptist's head that spoiled that party. Once produced, on a platter, at the request of a dancing girl, as you can imagine, that was the end of that party! In a sense, it was also the beginning of the end for Herod, as he was never the same again, as he learned later of the things that Jesus was doing, and he thought that this was John coming back to haunt him.

And here we are today, moving swiftly along in this period we call Advent, and on towards the 'festive season' of all 'festive seasons' in the Christian calendar, and what do we do? Start talking of John the Baptist, the lectionary theme for today (and last Sunday!).

Are we going to let him spoil our partying? Not likely, and he won't, if we really pay attention to him!

John's function, if you like, is to tell us who it is that we are preparing to celebrate, otherwise, we might not even know, for sadly, the Christmas Story has no more substance than any fairy tale for many, it just being part of the whole Christmas package, along with Father Christmas and Pantomime – a world of 'make believe'.

For us however, what the Christmas story tells is only too real! The child in a manger stands for: all the homeless children of the world; all those starving ones; for those for whom there is no room!

John says, "he's real, and, HE is the one!" whose coming is God's own coming; whose coming is full of promise; whose coming brings judgement! "I am the voice of someone shouting in the desert; make a straight path for the Lord to travel!" (v23). Be prepared!

John the Baptist often comes across as a threatening figure, with some justification. Certainly Herod felt threatened by him. But his message was essentially joyful: "He's coming! God's promises are about to be fulfilled!" And for those who responded to his call, they were, and still are!"

May we continue to truly prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming afresh again into our hearts, this Christmas time.

### **Prayer**

Living God, as we remember John the Baptist, who by his integrity prepared the way for Jesus, and every other faithful witness who stood by your truth whatever the cost, make us faithful to the truth we know, may we prepare for his coming with true repentance from within our heavy hearts, so that by our integrity, we too may prepare the way for Jesus into many lives..

We continue in prayer, in obedience to your call, to now pray for others, as we pray now for:

The Church, both worldwide and locally in our community: that she may remain faithful in her teaching and witnessing to the Gospel message of 'Love' and 'Good News' to all.

The World and all creation: that we be good stewards of all that you have bestowed upon generations past, that we are not wasteful and reckless with what we have left now, that future generations may thank us for the decisions we make on climate change, and how we have preserved your bountiful creation.

For others: who live not as we do, those who live in pain, sorrow and despair, that they may come to know of an equal world, as the strong share their strength; the old are supported by the young; and we all live in a world free of greed, war, hunger, poverty and agony.

Our final prayers are for those whose present plight weighs heavy on our hearts; those known personally to us, or whose situation has been brought to our attention through the media,

who we name and lift up to you Lord, in a moments silence of our hearts.....

Living God, hear all our prayers, both those of our spoken word, and those of the silence of our hearts, all offered to you in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Saviour.

Amen

### **HYMN Sing we the King who is coming.....**

Sing we the King who is coming to reign;  
Glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!  
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,  
Joy to the nations when Jesus is King.

*Come let us sing: praise to our King,  
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:  
This is our song, who to Jesus belong:  
Glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.*

All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;  
Freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;  
Justice and truth from his spectre shall spring  
Wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King.

*Come let us sing: praise to our King,*

Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;  
Diablt shall not darken his witness within;  
Hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;  
Love is victorious when Jesus is King.

*Come let us sing: praise to our King,*

Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray;  
Hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day  
When this new song your creation shall sing;  
Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King.

*Come let us sing: praise to our King,*

**StF- 185 Charles Silvester Home (1865-1914)**

### **Blessing**

May God continue to give us courage and hope to live in his way;

May he give us the right words to say, and love for all our actions;

so that by our service, we too may prepare ourselves and others, for the coming our Jesus afresh into our lives, this Christmas time and beyond.

And may God's Blessing, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be on us all, this day and always. Amen

**Ron Wilson CCL No.315086**

## WORSHIP AT HOME

SUNDAY, 20<sup>th</sup> December

### Advent 4 Sunday

#### Call to Worship:

Come, Holy Spirit of God! Be with us today in our thoughts and our prayers.

Come, Holy Spirit of God! Be with us in our words and our deeds. Amen.

#### Hymn – Come, thou long-expected Jesus (StF 169)

Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
born to set thy people free,  
from our fears and sins release us,  
let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,  
hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation,  
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,  
born a child and yet a king,  
born to reign in us for ever,  
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

By thine own eternal Spirit  
rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all-sufficient merit  
raise us to thy glorious throne.

**Charles Wesley (1707–1788)**

#### Prayer: (we light the fourth advent candle)

Lord Jesus, Light of the world,  
Just as your young mother Mary  
Risky everything to nurture your growth,  
We say 'yes' to carrying the comfort of your  
presence to others.  
We need you; strengthen us to draw alongside  
others with you.  
We wait for you; fill us with your love for those  
you lead to us to.  
Comfort the people living in darkness,  
Oh glorious Lord of light.  
Amen

The Lord's Prayer - Our  
Father.....Amen

#### Today's Readings:

Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26 and  
Luke 1:26-38



#### Reflection:

The passage from the Gospel of Luke is entitled 'An angel promises the birth of Jesus to Mary' and follows on from the account of the same angel appearing to Zechariah promising the birth of John the Baptist. This angel was of course the angel Gabriel and Gabriel appeared not only to Zechariah and Mary but also to the prophet Daniel more than 500 years earlier. Each time Gabriel appears he brings important messages from God. Mary was a young, poor woman – all the characteristics of the day that would make her seem unusable by God for any major task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience God has ever demanded of anyone. I wonder if you feel like Mary, perhaps you feel that your ability, experience, or education makes you an unlikely candidate for God's service. We can learn from that young woman; God can use any of us for God's purposes if we place our trust in God. But we need to remember that God's favour does not automatically bring instant success or blessings. God's request of Mary, to be the mother of the Messiah was a great honour but would bring with it much pain and distress; her peers would ridicule her, her fiancé would come close to denying and leaving her, her son would be rejected, arrested, tortured and murdered. But through her son would come the world's only hope, and therefore Mary has been praised by countless generations. Her submission was part of God's plan to bring about salvation to you and to me. If sorrow weighs you down think of Mary and wait patiently for God to work out the plan that is unfolding in your life.

The birth of Jesus to a virgin is a miracle that many people find hard to believe. But having faith allows us to believe in the unbelievable for we know that nothing is impossible with God; he created the universe out of nothing and us humans from the dust of the earth. Indeed, it was Adam, the first human created by God who established the need for Jesus, the sinless man-God, to walk this earth and die the death he did. Today we celebrate Mary's great deed in honouring and obeying God, so let us all today offer our thanks for this unique and amazing woman. Amen.

**Prayer:**

As we pray to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

we say with Mary:

**Holy is your name.**

Your prophet of old foretold a day when a virgin would conceive and bear a son who would be called God-with-us.

Help us to look forward to your deliverance and to seek the fullness of your kingdom.

**Holy is your name.**

Your angel declared to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Saviour.

Help every Christian person to be open to your word and obedient to your will.

**Holy is your name.**

Mary rejoiced with Elizabeth and sang your praise, 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.' Help us to live joyful lives that sing your praise.

**Holy is your name.**

Mary bore a son of David's line, a king whose reign would never end.

Bless all the nations of the world with Christ's gift of peace.

**Holy is your name.**

The child Jesus grew in wisdom and stature in the home of Mary and Joseph.

Strengthen our homes and families, and keep under your protection all those whom we love.

**Holy is your name.**

At the foot of the cross of Christ stood his mother, and from the cross she received his lifeless body in her arms.

Give comfort and healing to all who suffer and all who watch the suffering of those they love.

**Holy is your name.**

The apostle John saw a vision of a woman in heaven, robed with the sun.

Bring us with all those who have died in the faith of Christ to share the joy of heaven with Mary and all the saints.

**Holy is your name.**

Almighty and everlasting God, your handmaid Mary magnified your name and rejoiced in your saving love:

trusting in that same love,

we ask all these our prayers

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

**Amen.**

**Hymn – The Angel Gabriel (StF 187)**

The Angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;  
'All hail,' said he, 'thou lowly maiden Mary,  
most highly favoured lady.' Gloria!

'For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,  
all generations laud and honour thee,  
thy son shall be Immanuel, by seers foretold;  
most highly favoured lady.' Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
'To me be as it pleaseth God,' she said,  
'My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name:'  
most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

Of her, Immanuel, the Christ was born  
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,  
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever  
say,

'Most highly favoured lady.' Gloria!

**Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924)**

**Blessing:**

The holy mystery we call God is our refuge for times of trouble. Remember we are embraced by the Source of life, love and hope, following in the way of Jesus, encouraged by the Spirit of grace and wisdom. Amen



## WORSHIP AT HOME

SUNDAY, 27 December

### Call to Worship:

'The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favour of God was upon him.

### Hymn – Born in the night (StF 193)

- 1 Born in the night, Mary's Child,  
A long way from your home;  
Coming in need, Mary's Child,  
Born in a borrowed room.
- 2 Clear shining light, Mary's Child,  
Your face lights up our way;  
Light of the world, Mary's Child,  
Dawn on our darkened day.
- 3 Truth of our life, Mary's Child,  
You tell us God is good;  
Prove it is true, Mary's Child,  
Go to your cross of wood.
- 4 Hope of the world, Mary's Child,  
You're coming soon to reign;  
King of the earth, Mary's Child,  
Walk in our streets again.

Geoffrey Ainger (1925-2013)

### Prayer:

We worship the God of time and eternity:  
We worship the God who existed before creation  
leapt into being: our beginning, our present and  
our future.

We worship the God who has been with us in this  
closing year: our beginning, our present and our  
future.

We worship the God who will be with us as our  
stories continue: our beginning, our present and  
our future.

We worship the God who is with us today and  
will be for ever. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer** - Our Father.....Amen

**Today's Readings:** Luke 2: 22-40

Galatians 4: 4-7

### Waiting for the right time ...

Timing can be critical. Try making Millionaire's  
Shortbread – if you don't get the timing  
absolutely right when you cook the caramel you  
end up either with caramel that runs out from

under the chocolate or solid  
toffee. Miss the moment and  
there is little you can do to  
bring it back.

In his letter to the Galatians,  
Paul tells us that God sent  
Jesus to be amongst us 'when  
the time had fully come ...'.

In many ways, it didn't seem an auspicious start  
for any baby. But God's timing is always right.  
Although the circumstances of Jesus' birth may  
seem scandalous for one who is to be the  
Messiah, it in fact gave the clearest possible  
picture of the nature of the God whom he came  
to reveal – a God whose concern is to bring  
wholeness to all. In both the timing and the  
circumstances of the birth of Jesus God made it  
clear that he identifies with those least able to  
pursue that wholeness for themselves – the poor  
and marginalised. And so God's timing ensured  
the Saviour of the world was born into such a  
family and even experienced early life as a  
homeless refugee. Of course, the visits of the  
shepherds and Magi would make it clear that our  
God is a God for all.

And God's timing also ensured just the right  
parents were available. Right from the moment  
she receives the news of her pregnancy to the  
foot of the cross, Mary remains God's willing  
servant, loving and caring for the son with whom  
she has been entrusted. Joseph, too, was the  
right choice. He could so easily have abandoned  
Mary to her fate, but he stood by her and gave up  
everything to protect his family. They may have  
had no material wealth, but they were surely  
exactly the right loving and faithful parents for  
this little child. Worth waiting for.

We frequently struggle with God's sense of  
timing and we struggle with waiting, but he will  
often bring things together in a way and at a time  
which brings blessing – perhaps to many rather  
than just one. We might have prayed for  
something to happen and got fed up with what  
appeared to be God's lack of response. But later  
we can see that the time of waiting perhaps  
changed us, or allowed something else important  
to happen and God's timing turned out to be the  
best after all.

So, how do we wait for the timing to be right?  
Simeon and Anna waited with hope and  
expectancy – and their faithful waiting was  
rewarded. They recognised instantly that in this



little baby God's promise of a Messiah was fulfilled and they found joy and great peace. Can we, like them, learn to be content to wait on God's moment in faith and with hope and expectancy, worship and prayer?

**Prayer:**

Much has happened in the world in this past year, Lord. We pray for those caught up in the big events that made it into the news – especially the pandemic – and those whose personal tragedies were never told in public. We pray for an end to violence, oppression and injustice of all kinds. We thank you for all the people and organisations that work quietly to bring peace, to release those enslaved and to empower all the world's powerless. We pray too for those who have worked tirelessly to bring about advances in science, engineering and medicine that will contribute to the wellbeing of the world.

Lord of the years, bring your hope. Much has happened in our churches in this past year, Lord. We thank you that you have journeyed with us through it all. We give especial thanks for all that is new that has emerged. We ask that you will lead us into the coming year, providing the strength and courage we need to step out in faith into the unknown. We pray for our leaders and those who serve through their ministry of care. We pray for ourselves and for the path of discipleship we are on. Enable us all to hear your voice and give us fresh vision as we journey together.

Lord of the years, bring your hope. Much has happened in our towns and villages in this past year, Lord. So many people have given their time and energy to serve others. We know that there are still many problems – some we see and talk about, others that are hidden. In the coming year, help us to work together to build community well beyond our church walls, reaching out to neighbours and tending the wounds of those who are hurting, however and wherever they may be among us.

Lord of the years, bring your hope. Much has happened in the lives of our families and friends in this past year, Lord. Be close to all of them and bring comfort to those who are struggling now and in the coming year, whether with physical, mental, emotional or spiritual

hurts. We remember all whose journeys with us in this life came to an end and we pray for their families and friends and for all who are bereaved.

Lord of the years, bring your hope. As we move into a new year, we look for the day when Christ returns, gathering us from all over the globe and across time, and reuniting us before the throne of God. Amen

**Hymn: Who would think that what was needed (StF 222, tune: Scarlet Ribbons)**

1. Who would think that what was needed  
To transform and save the earth  
Might not be a plan or army,  
Proud in purpose, proved in worth?  
Who would think, despite derision,  
That a child should lead the way?  
God surprises earth with heaven,  
Coming here in Christmas Day.
2. Shepherds watch and wise men wonder,  
Monarchs scorn and angels sing;  
Such a place as none would reckon  
Hosts a holy helpless thing;  
Stable beasts and by-passed strangers  
Watch a baby laid in hay:  
God surprises earth with heaven  
Coming here on Christmas Day.
3. Centuries of skill and science  
Span the past from which we move,  
Yet experience questions whether,  
With such progress, we improve.  
While the human lot we ponder,  
Lest our hopes and humour fray,  
God surprises earth with heaven  
Coming here on Christmas Day.

John Bell and Graham Maule

**Blessing:**

The holy mystery we call God is our refuge for times of trouble. Remember we are embraced by the Source of life, love and hope, following in the way of Jesus, encouraged by the Spirit of grace and wisdom. Amen

Rev Jennet McLeod CCL No 315086