

Worship at home – 5th December 2021

Key Scriptures: Luke 3:1-6

Key Themes:

This week we explore the idea of promise that Jesus is of all.

Call to Worship:

We come to praise you, Lord, God of Israel, and all nations. We come to you who set your people free. We come to you who guides us into the way of Peace. We come to you as we journey through Advent and prepare to welcome, once again the Christ Child.

Amen.

Hymn: From the squalor of a borrowed stable.

From the squalor of a borrowed stable,
By the Spirit and a virgin's faith;
To the anguish and the shame of scandal
Came the Saviour of the human race.
But the skies were filled with the praise of heaven,
Shepherds listen as the angels tell
Of the Gift of God come down to man
At the dawning of Immanuel.

King of heaven now the Friend of sinners,
Humble servant in the Father's hands,
Filled with power and the Holy Spirit,
Filled with mercy for the broken man.
Yes, He walked my road and He felt my pain,
Joys and sorrows that I know so well;
Yet His righteous steps give me hope again -
I will follow my Immanuel.

Through the kisses of a friend's betrayal,
He was lifted on a cruel cross;
He was punished for a world's transgressions,
He was suffering to save the lost.
He fights for breath, He fights for me,
Loosing sinners from the claims of hell;
And with a shout our souls are free -
Death defeated by Immanuel.

Now He's standing in the place of honour,
Crowned with glory on the highest throne,
Interceding for His own beloved
Till His Father calls to bring them home!
Then the skies will part as the trumpet sounds
Hope of heaven or the fear of hell;
But the Bride will run to her Lover's arms,
Giving glory to Immanuel!

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Prayers: Adoration:

Advent God, you prepared your people for your coming, you gave your Word to us through prophets and priests, through stories told and retold, through the history of time, through the written word, through the spoken word, but always your words. As Christmas lights begin to dazzle us, we know that your glory is way beyond their transfixing power. Advent God, we adore you, and we bring ourselves before you just as we are.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

There are signs of God, and we are blind to them, there are voices that cry out and we close our ears to them. There are signs of people's need and we do not see them, and cries of those in pain and we pass them by. There are signs of God's kingdom to be seen, and the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard: O God, forgive us when we ignore you and ignore our neighbours, near and far.

Amen

Assurance of forgiveness:

God spoke through Zechariah, saying "Tell the people: they will be saved by forgiveness of their sins". God's promises endure for ever and ever; so, let us be assured, our sins are forgiven.

Amen.

Psalm 145 - A psalm of praise. Of David.

- ¹ I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- ² Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- ³ Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- ⁴ One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- ⁵ They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.^[b]
- ⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- ⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- ⁸ The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- ⁹ The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- ¹⁰ All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.
- ¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- ¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.

¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.^[c]

¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.

¹⁶ You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰ The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

Reading: Luke 3:1-6 - The Preaching of John the Baptist

3 It was the fifteenth year of the rule of Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip was ruler of the territory of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler of Abilene, ² and Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests. At that time the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. ³ So John went throughout the whole territory of the Jordan River, preaching, "Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins." ⁴ As it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

"Someone is shouting in the desert:
'Get the road ready for the Lord;
make a straight path for him to travel!

⁵ Every valley must be filled up,
every hill and mountain levelled off.

The winding roads must be made straight,
and the rough paths made smooth.

⁶ The whole human race will see God's salvation!"

Meditation: The voice of promise

I am the voice of promise that speaks from one generation to the next. From tablets of stone to beautiful rainbows, from a helpless child to an empty cross. Life's rich tapestry stretched out before you, for all the world to see. My promises, made,

broken and re-established, my kingdom formed, fractured and accepted, my kingship confirmed.

Now my promise is for you. Offered up as in days of old. An invitation to step out from the familiar, into the unknown. To leave the land of plenty for a barren wilderness on the promise of something better. To leave family and friends for the lonely road on the promise of glimpse of God.

To trek the solitary pathways, with sharp and jagged stones beneath your feet. To roam down roads full potholes, encountering its twists and turns. Where mountains are high and rivers are deep, still I promise to be your comfort and guide.

When you travel, I'll travel with you. When you stumble, I will pick you up and set you right again. Uphill and down dale, through light and dark. Through hope and despair. Through life and death. You will never be alone.

For I have promised to go before you. To keep in step beside you and I have always got your back. When you struggle under the weight of the day, I will be your companion, sharing the load, and cheering you on. Ready to wave the chequered flag and welcome you home.

Home, the place where I am waiting. The place that I have promised to prepare for you. Where you are valued and claimed as a child of God. A place where you can lay down your burdens and find rest and healing and restoration in me. Where love and hope find their being in the peace of my presence, and you are held in the hollow of God's hand.

I am the voice of promise both then and now. So, as you stand on the threshold of your voyage, listen to my voice, and hear that my promise is for you.

Pause for thought:

- In our political arena today, we are hearing a lot about Levelling up. The ideal that all people will be equal and hold the same social standing.
- However, not much has changed as Jesus came to be the great leveller, for all that believe in him would, have eternal life.
- The promise of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled in John the Baptist and eventually in Jesus.
- John would come and prepare the way this was the promise and it came to pass.
- So many of God's promises have come to pass.
- And we must go into our future trusting in the promises we have.
- This Advent we have the opportunity to stop and think about the promise God has made not only in the Bible but in our own life.
- God promised the rainbow, and even now when we see a rainbow in the sky, I hope we are reminded of God's promise to us.
- During the height of the Pandemic the Rainbow was used again.
- Isn't it interesting that of all the symbols that could have been used for the NHS at this time it was the rainbow that was chosen.
- A sign of God's promised hope that we are not in this alone, and even if people did not know the significances of Noah's rainbow it was a sign that spoken, without words, of hope in the midst of despair.

- Through Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit God promised that he would be with us till the very end of the age.
- And through good and bad, highs and lows we will not be alone.
- This is the promise of Advent.
- Last week we thought of Hope in our time, this week we remember the promises God has made to his people in the past to the chosen people of Israel not even now to us as we travel on.
- So, if as is hinted at in the meditation we feel sometimes that we are on a lonely trek and where it feels like the world is encroaching in on us, it is then that we need to remember the promises of God to us.
- The rainbow of hope.
- The birth of a helpless child, God's own Son made man for us.
- The wooden cross standing empty at the break of day.
- And I guess most importantly of all the gift of the Holy Spirit to journey with us to be our comfort and guide until the very end of the age.
- The promise that in all things – we will never be alone.
- That each of us that chose to become followers of Jesus will be claimed and valued and loved as children of God, from now until eternity.

Amen.

Intercessions:

Creator God, the children of your world come to you in prayer: some hungry –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Some the victims of war –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Some poor and oppressed –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

All of us sinful –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Saviour God, the children of humanity come to you in prayer:

Some lonely and anxious –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Some sorrowful or sick –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Some finding life empty of meaning –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

All of us sinful –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Spirit of God, the children of your church come to you in prayer:

Some suffering in body, mind, or spirit –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Some finding it hard to trust in you –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Some angry or disillusioned with one another –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

All of us sinful –

In your tender compassion: **deliver us.**

Sarah and Brain Margetts – Dalwood

Gill and Geoff Nicholls – Axminster.

In the name of Christ, your Word made flesh.

Amen

Hymn: Long ago, prophets knew

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, ring, ring!
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes,
When he comes,
Who will make him welcome?

Mary, hail! Though afraid;
She believed, she obeyed.
In her womb God is laid;
Till the time expected
Nurtured and protected.
Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring!
Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes,
When he comes,
Who will make him welcome?

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!

Source: [Musixmatch](#)

Songwriters: Anonymous

Blessing:

Loving God, we commit to following you this week into corners of the community we usually prefer to ignore. Help us to pray and speak and act for change.

Amen