

25th December 2022 – Morning Service

Rev Chris Watson

Call to Worship

God of surprises, may we sing like the angels, may we be amazed like the shepherds, and, like the wise men, may we worship the newborn king.

Advent Candle Liturgy

It's Christmas! And Jesus, the Christ child, Immanuel, is born amongst us, born for us on this very special day.

Born for you and me. **Immanuel God is with us**

Born for people who are different from us. **Immanuel God is with us**

Born for the world. **Immanuel God is with us**

Born for the marginalised. **Immanuel God is with us**

Our Advent candles have been lit and on this Christmas Day we light our central candle to welcome Jesus who is the Light of the World.

Prayers

Loving God, we thank you for this season of Christmas – for all it means to so many over the years, and all it continues to mean.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise**

We thank you for carols old and new, for familiar and much - loved words of Scripture, for all that speaks of your coming among us in Christ.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise**

We thank you for reunions with family and friends, for the spirit of giving and receiving, for the mood of goodwill and celebration.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise**

We thank you for all the good things we will enjoy – good food, good company and good fun.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise**

Loving God, help us in all of this to keep sight of the heart of Christmas, what it all really means – to celebrate the birth of the infant Christ, to worship him reverently as shepherds and wise men long ago, to welcome and follow him as faithfully as those who left everything to be his disciples.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise**

Loving God, forgive us if we have lost sight of what this season truly means. Forgive us if we have become over familiar with it's simple yet wonderful message. Forgive us if we have failed to make room for Christ in our Christmas celebrations.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise**

Speak to us now through all we shall do and share, all we shall sing and hear, so that our lives may be touched by the wonder of his presence.

L: You have given us so much **R: Receive our praise through Jesus Christ. Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.**

StF 227 – Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

- 1) Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us your aid;
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.
- 2) Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
Low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
Angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker, and Monarch, and Saviour of all.
- 3) Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
Odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest or gold from the mine?
- 4) Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would his favour secure;
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.
- 5) Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us your aid;
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber

Reading: Luke 2:1-14

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, 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 them, '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.'

Reflection

So what is Christmas really about? Is it the stories told of shepherds, of sheep, of wise men from the East with their presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh? Is it about the stories of a young girl caught up in God's plan to save his creation. Perhaps it is about singing familiar carols and listening to the same readings each year, perhaps it's all about traditions.

Christmas is about all of the above and more. We get caught up in the romance of it all, in the cuteness of children acting out the stories. We are so used to seeing miniature Marys dressed in blue and white accompanied by small Josephs with the compulsory tea towels who suddenly whip out a bundle of joy without a taking a break in their stride, that we forget the messiness of it all.

Christmas is about God breaking into our world, it is about God becoming human, about God becoming a helpless baby. It is about God experiencing what it means to be human, what it means to be poor, to be homeless, to be a refugee. It's about God understanding what it means to suffer loss and joy as a human. Christmas is about putting aside ourselves and thinking of others, it about giving gifts to celebrate the greatest gift any of us could ever receive, the gift of God's son to the world at Christmas.

It doesn't end there though because Christmas is about Easter, so Happy Christmas and Happy Easter!

StF 222 – Who would think that what was needed

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| 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 might lead the way?
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. |
| 2) Shepherds watch and wise men wonder,
Monarchs scorn and angels sing;
Such a think 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. | |

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Prayers

Lord Jesus Christ, born an outcast and a refugee, in weakness and frailty, as we rejoice today hear our prayers for those who have no cause for celebration. We pray for the hungry, for the homeless, the oppressed and exploited. We pray for the lonely, for the sorrowful and the bereaved, for all those whose lives have been shattered by war, by tragedy and disaster.

Lord Jesus Christ born to set your people free, come again to our world, bring light where there is darkness, hope where there is despair, love where there is hatred. Come again to our world and bring that day nearer when your kingdom will come, and your will be done. Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer.**

StF 212 – O come all ye faithful

- 1) O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him,
Born the King of angels:
- 2) True God of true God,
Light of Light eternal,
Lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
Son of the Father,
Begotten, not created:
- 3) See how the shepherds,
Summoned to his cradle,
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
We too will thither
Bend our joyful footsteps:
- 4) Lo, star-led chieftains,
Magi, Christ adoring,
Offer him incense, gold, and myrrh;
We to the Christ-child
Bring our hearts' oblations:
- 5) Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:
'Glory to God in the highest':
- 6) Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be glory given:
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:

John Francis Wade

Blessing

Go now, with laughter in your eyes, a smile on your lips, a song in your heart and merriment in your soul.
Go and share the joy Christ has given you. **Amen**