



Western Fells Methodist Circuit

6 December 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst you are unable to get to church. If you are viewing this over the internet there are links to the hymns on youtube.

We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.



Opening Prayer

Lord grant us the same eagerness in waiting and the bigness of desire that we had when children, and the faith that knows the greatest gift is Christ Jesus himself. Amen.

Hymn: Come, thou long-expected Jesus (Singing the Faith 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)

Let us pray together

Father God, whose is the world in which I live, and to whom I owe my being, accept the love and praise for which I was created.

Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes took human flesh to reveal God's glory and to bring the Kingdom; who for us sinners endured the cross and triumphed in resurrection, accept the love and praise for which I was redeemed.

Holy Spirit of God, sent as the seal upon the finished work of Christ to equip the church and to bear fruit in yielded lives, accept the love and praise for which I was sanctified.

Thanks be to you, Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament Isaiah 40 verses 1 to 11

Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

A voice says, 'Cry out!'

And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.

Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;

say to the cities of Judah,
‘Here is your God!’
See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Today’s Gospel Reading: Mark 1 verses 1 to 8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,
‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight” ’,

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’

Time to Reflect

The usual question from preachers is along the lines of ‘Have you prepared?’ and recites a litany of pre-Christmas tasks. Predictable; boring; patronising. And below the dignity of the event.

The obsession of preachers – and advertisers and shopkeepers – on ‘preparation’ means we miss the point. It isn’t about the red-carpet or the

ticker-tape, since nothing could be worthy of the entrance of the Son of God. Preparing is pointless unless the event takes place.

Rather, like the sentry, we are primed for his arrival. We are watching for his coming. Fans of steam trains spot the tell-tale plume of smoke before the train itself comes into sight; we watch the arrivals board as we wait for family to arrive at the airport; so worshippers spot the tell-tale of majesty veiled in flesh and laid in a manger. They come in wonder and worship, and they return transformed by the love that stooped to conquer. The herald of Good Tidings tells them that that they can behold their God. He is here. He will baptize, not with water as a sign, but with the reality of his Holy Spirit. As we welcome him, so we become *his* guests, his flock.

Take a time to sit quietly



During this season the Methodist Church is proclaiming “God is with us”. God is with us is more than a statement. It’s a reminder that God is always with us. We are encouraged to share our story (and other people’s stories) of walking with God in this extraordinary year. How might you share how God has been with you this week?

A time of prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, how little the world seems to have changed in 2000 years! We pray for those situations that are still sadly too familiar:
you were born to a couple too poor to afford the usual sacrifice, and we pray for those who struggle to make ends meet;
there was no room to welcome you at your birth, and we pray for so many homeless on our streets, and refugees from danger;
your touch brought healing to the sick, and we pray for those who suffer today;
you fed the hungry crowds, and we pray for those who are hungry, for those dependent on the food banks;
you were familiar with the sight of soldiers in the streets, and we pray for places of conflict, that peace, justice and reconciliation may come;
people whose lives were broken by failure and shame found restoration and

hope in you, and we pray for those who feel they have lost all their worth or have sinned beyond redemption; may they know your grace that can give them the worth of children of God;
the lost and weary and bewildered found a yoke that was easy; be so gentle a Saviour to the many who still find life overwhelming.
We bring our prayers in your name, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: 'The prophets' voice comes down the years' (Singing the Faith 162)

The prophets' voice comes down the years
to teach and to inspire,
to show the nature of our God
in words and deeds of fire;
not to disclose some rigid plan
that God has set in stone,
but to renew the promises
the saints have always known.

The prophets' voice speaks of the past --
the actions that reveal
the way God used the people then
this broken world to heal;
and then translates the things gone by
in ways that we find new
so we can judge the world we know
by standards ever true.

The prophets' voice holds up a glass
in which to see our day;
events which span the globe around
and things we do and say.
It calls us to repent and turn
from things that tear life down,
to choose the path that Jesus chose
and share his work and crown.

A prayer of blessing

Christ Jesus, the Light of the world, shine upon us; Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, fill our life with his peace; Christ Jesus, gift of the Father's love, set our heart ablaze with his love; and the blessing of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and all we love and pray for, now and always. Amen.

*Original Materials by Rev Godfrey Nicholson
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The Big Church Sing Christmas Special was broadcast live on the Methodist Church's YouTube channel on Sunday 29 November. Have you seen it yet? If you have access to the internet go to <https://www.youtube.com/methodistchurch>