

18th December, 2022

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a

comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you

begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

See, amid the winter's snow,
born for us on earth below,
see the tender Lamb appears,
promised from eternal years.

Refrain:

Hail! Thou ever-blessed morn!
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He, who throned in height sublime,
sits amid the cherubim!
[Refrain]

Say, ye holy shepherds, say,
what your joyful news today;
wherefore have ye left your sheep

on the lonely mountain steep?
[Refrain]

"As we watched at dead of night,
lo, we saw a wondrous light;
angels singing 'Peace on earth'
told us of the Saviour's birth."
[Refrain]

Sacred Infant, all divine,
what a tender love was Thine;
thus to come from highest bliss
down to such a world as this!
[Refrain]

Teach, O teach us, Holy Child,
by Thy face so meek and mild,
teach us to resemble Thee
in Thy sweet humility!
[Refrain]



Sermon by Rev Howard Wright.

Read Isaiah 7:10-16 and Matthew 1:18-2

Matthew tells his story of Jesus from the Jewish and somewhat male perspective – notice the Old Testament reference and the focus on Joseph. Luke tells the non-Jewish (Gentile) and female perspective.

Traditionally it's understood Mark wrote the first Gospel, from information passed on by Peter and Paul. Matthew then expanded Mark's version and brought a stronger Jewish perspective. Luke, probably aware of Mark's and Matthew's Gospels, writes for the emerging Gentile audience, and John, almost certainly aware of the three 'synoptics', as they are called, writes a more crafted theological reflection.

So, here in this passage Matthew points back and forwards.

Backwards he links to just one of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus. Jesus fulfilled at least 300 Old Testament references to his earthly life. This is remarkable, and unique! There is no possible human way of influencing the place and manner of your birth, or engineering, even contorting, your life events and death, to fulfil such a range of predictions about a life all written 300 – 2,000 years before your birth – yet Jesus fulfils all, every one of them precisely. This is a miracle!

In Matthew's version, Joseph's role and exemplary behaviour is seen. He acts in the proper Jewish and godly manner. He treats Mary with extraordinary respect considering her seeming illegitimate pregnancy – including being patient sexually, not wanting to take what is his or claim anything for himself.

And in an indication of the new thing God is doing, an angel appears and advises Joseph, and most crucially, Joseph listens.

God continues to look today for those who will live godly lives and listen. Hebrews 1:1-2 says: 'In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.' And today he speaks to us through Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, through his Word, the Bible, and occasionally by dreams and angels.

Are we listening, are we obeying his call today?

The Hebrews passage quoted above continues into verse 3: 'The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.' Matthew, looking forwards, records that Joseph is told to name the child Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.'

Jesus saves. This is a most extraordinary thing, which when familiar risks being too easily assumed.

That God would come to us is amazing, as captured in the carol Hark the Herald angels sing:

*Christ by highest Heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail, the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing:
Glory to the new-born King.*

Or, as Once in Royal David's city says:

*He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall;
With the poor, and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.*

The holy God becomes our Saviour – his life given for us. Take time this Christmas and take this in – Come and worship Christ the new-born King.

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)*

- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.



Collect: Fourth Sunday of Advent

God our redeemer, who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of your Son: grant that, as she looked for his coming as our saviour, so we may be ready to greet him when he comes again as our judge; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: *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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. 18th Jan. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 25th Jan at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.