

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Worship at Home:

Sunday 26th December 2021,
The Sunday after Christmas

Welcome and Preparation

I begin this service, with an assumption that you have celebrated Christmas Day yesterday, either with television, radio, family, church, or in another way.

Many of our churches are shut today, after our Advent and Christmas Day services, so if you are worshipping at home with this service sheet for the first time, welcome.

My prayer is that through this worship you will feel the presence of the Christ-child.

Call to Worship (Psalm 148 verses 2 to 6)

Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he
commanded and they were created.
He established them for ever and ever;
(This is a wonderful psalm of praise, if you
have time, please read the full psalm.)

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Angels from the realms of glory, (StF 190),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViVs2bg6OZM>

Angels, from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight over all the earth;
Ye, who sang Creation's story,
Now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds in the fields abiding,
Watching over your flocks by night,
God with man is now residing,
Yonder shines the infant Light:
Come and worship, come and worship
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Saints before the altar bending,
Watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
In his temple shall appear
Come and worship, come and worship
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Though an infant now we view him,
He shall fill his Father's throne,
Gather all the nations to him;
Every knee shall then bow down:
Come and worship, come and worship
Worship Christ, the newborn King

James Montgomery, 1771-1854

Prayers

Advent Litany - 'Among The Poor'

Among the poor, among the proud, among the
persecuted, among the privileged,
'Christ is Coming'

'He is coming to make all things new'

In the private house, in the market place, in
the wedding feast, in the judgment hall,
'Christ is Coming'

'He is coming to make all things new'

With a gentle touch, with an angry word, with
a clear conscience, with burning love,
'Christ is Coming'

'He is coming to make all things new'

That the kingdom might come, that the world
might believe, that the powerful might
stumble, that the humble might be raised,
'Christ is Coming'

'He is coming to make all things new'

Amen

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Advent Feet

God, your advent feet come silently along our
noisy streets; the noise, our ears, the silence
contain the Christ **WE FAIL** to greet.

God, your advent feet come silently along our
noisy streets; the noise, our ears, the silence
contain the Christ **WE FEAR** to greet.

God, your advent feet come silently along our noisy streets; the noise, our ears, the silence contain the Christ **WE LONG** to greet.

Amen

© Geoffrey Duncan, 1998

Father, forgive us our **failings**. Forgive us our **fears**. Replace them with **longing** to do your will, as we welcome you again into our hearts this Christmas time. Amen.

Read Luke 2 v 22-35

Reflection

Now that December 25th is past, I'm sure many families are counting the cost of Christmas. The financial cost of the food, presents for the family, clothes for any parties they were able to attend; everything that goes into the way that we celebrate Christmas in the twenty-first century.

There was a cost to those involved in the Christmas story too. Not so much a financial cost, but a cost nonetheless. Think about the characters who we know about in the story.

Mary and Joseph. They had the cost of a long journey, from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Joseph the carpenter faced loss of income for the time he was away. They journeyed because of the census and no doubt there was a cost to them in taxes because of the census.

The wise men. They had an even longer trip, following a star and not knowing where it was leading. For them, there was also the cost of the presents, even if they were rich men.

The shepherds. They weren't rich men. Tradition tells us they gave a gift of a lamb. Whatever they gave, it must have been a dramatic occurrence to make hardened working men give a gift to a child.

The innkeeper. Perhaps the cost to him was guilt, at not being able to provide a room for the woman who was about to have a baby. Unlike two thousand years later, for him and all the other innkeepers, financially it was a good time to be in the hospitality industry!

But what about the cost for Jesus? He was no ordinary baby. We read in Luke and Matthew about the many strange things which happened to Mary and Joseph before the birth of their first son. Mary's relative, Elizabeth, became pregnant even though she was 'very old.' Mary became pregnant while she and Joseph were betrothed but not married. Angels appeared carrying messages. Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, also prophesied. Then Jesus was born, not in a home but in an innkeeper's stable. Shepherds appeared and some time later wise men.

When Jesus was forty days old his parents took him to the temple in Jerusalem. Because of the census, Jesus was dedicated at Jerusalem. We are told, just before our lesson today, (Luke 2 verse 19) 'Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.' Jesus was no ordinary baby.

When Mary meets Simeon at the Jerusalem temple, he takes the child in his arms and says, 'Now Lord, you have kept your promise and you may let your servant go in peace. With my own eyes I have seen your salvation. A light to reveal your will to the gentiles and bring glory to your people Israel.' - to Mary he says, 'Sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.'

From the beginning of his life, the cost – the true cost - of Christmas to Jesus was there. At Christmas we should remember that the true cost to Jesus of his coming to earth was the loss of his status, being stripped of his deity when he became a baby. The cost was living and working with people who turned against him. The cost was paying the price of being the Saviour of the world. The cost was to save all people by serving, by teaching, by living and giving up his life, so that through his life and death people could come to know salvation.

The cross of Christ is central to the Christmas story. God freely gave us his son – the infant Christ – to save us. Jesus freely gave his life for us, to save us - from our sins, from ourselves. That is the Christmas message.

I know some Christians feel strongly about Christmas being abbreviated to Xmas. 'Put Christ back into Christmas!' they say. (I notice in the Marks and Spencer advert this year, at the end of the 'Marshmallow type of Christmas' song, and all the dancing, that the final screen says X M and S) For me, whenever I see Xmas, I see Christmas – the babe in the manger – but I also see Crossmas – the Son of God dying on a cross for me, and rising again. Dying to show a better way to God than had been available before; to show us the only way to know God as Jesus did, as our Father. The only way is through the cross of Jesus Christ. Expensive, wasn't it - Christmas - for Jesus.

But what about the cost to us? How do we respond to the Jesus who came to earth for us? Do we put the cost at how much money we have spent this year? The birth of a child is a time of relief and joy, a time and a gift without price. Yet at that time Mary was told the cost: 'Sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart.' The gifts that we have given and received are a token of God's love for us in Jesus. How do we respond?

I want to suggest two ways in which we can learn from the example of Simeon.

Firstly, Simeon had waited a long time to see God's promise fulfilled. While he waited, he persisted in living his life close to God. He spent his life in devotion and prayer and in belief that one day God's promise would be fulfilled. Could that be the cost of Christmas for us? To spend time in devotion and prayer. To try and live closer to God in the days ahead that we have in the past? This is one of the tenets of a Methodist Way of Life. I commend the commitment card to you, as a useful tool for daily devotions, and a reminder of how our commitment as Methodist Christians should show in our worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/16918/mwol-commitment-card-220420.pdf>.

Secondly, Simeon went to the temple because he was moved by the Holy Spirit. Because he

lived his life close to God, he was open to receive the prompting of The Holy Spirit and to be guided by Him. Guided to a moment of great joy when he held baby Jesus but also to a moments of trial when he has to tell Mary that 'sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart'. Is that the message of the cost of Xmas to us? To be more reactive to what God's Spirit is saying to us?

Expensive, wasn't it, Christmas?

to all the people involved in the story;

to us as we respond to the Christmas message; most of all to Jesus.

Expensive, wasn't it?

Listen, read, pray or sing along

Beneath the paper wrappings, there's an open stable door, (StF 192)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpBwMt6tIIM>

Beneath the paper wrappings,
there's an open stable door,
beneath the fir tree trappings,
there's a welcome and there's more.
Beyond the tinsel fairy
is a presence that's divine,
there's a child to change the future,
turning water into wine.

*Look inside, look above,
look beyond and see the love,
Look inside and you will see.
Look inside, look below,
look beyond, and you will know,
The one who came to give his life
for you and me.*

The miracle of childbirth
now reveals God's only Son,
A miracle beginning that continues on and on.
The stable holds the echo
of the tomb that's yet to be,
on the manger lies the shadow
of the cross he's yet to see

Claire Stainsby (b 1959), © 1991 Hole Music

Prayers of Intercession.

Lord, we offer you the Church, the community of faith in which your world has been born and is at work.....

May your people be increasingly aware this Christmas season that only your song of love can change hearts and human lives.

Lord, in this Christmas season your voice struggles to assert itself and be heard above the clamour of conflicts, in our country and globally.....

Lord, we pray that your song of love will change hearts and human lives.

Lord, your incarnate Son walks in the streets of our local community, in our schools, hospitals, shops and homes. We offer you the needs we know of in our community.....

Lord, we pray that your song of love will change hearts and human lives.

Lord, we bring before you those who are ill, in body and in mind, poor, and frightened.....

May the Christmas season signify for them the birth of hope and renewal through your healing love.

Lord, we pray that your song of love will change hearts and human lives.

Lord, as we worship together for the last time this year, we remember the loved ones we have lost, especially those we have lost in 2021.....

We rejoice that they now live with you in your kingdom. We believe that something of their faith and goodness can live on in us.

Lord, we pray that your song of love will change hearts and human lives.

The Lord's Prayer

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, accept these gifts, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

God of Eve and God of Mary; (StF 119),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGTFZ7Evc>

God of Eve and God of Mary,
God of love and mother earth,
thank you for the ones who with us
shared their life and gave us birth.

As you came to earth in Jesus,
so you come to us today;
you are present in our caring
that prepares us for life's way.

Thank you, that the Church, our Mother,
gives us bread and fills our cup,
and the comfort of the Spirit
warms our hearts and lifts us up.

Thank you for belonging, shelter,
bonds of friendship, ties of blood,
and for those who have no children,
yet are parents under God.

God of Eve and God of Mary,
Christ our Brother, human Son,
Spirit, caring like a Mother,
take our love and make us one.

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

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Blessing

May the one who holds the world in His hand,
take yours;

May His loving hand protect and guide you;
May you have the intimate knowledge of His
love for you;

May you know His presence with you,
May you know that you are not alone; He is
with you;

May you know His blessing and receive His
peace, and may He lead you,
and all those you love and care for,
safely into the New Year, in His name; Amen.

Zoë Keens, CEO, Christian Education, IBRA

This service was prepared by Graham Hepburn

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