



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 29th December 2024

*compiled by Michael Winter Local Preacher &
Anglican Lay Minister*

From Psalm 148:

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.
Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.
Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

Prayer of Confession

Lord of Christmas Peace,
we have done wrong.
We have tarnished the gift you gave freely.

We have buried you so deeply in our hearts, the world doesn't see you.
We have not followed Christ,
we have ignored your teachings,
we have lived lives of apathy against your love,
we have built fences and fortresses to push people away,
and we have silenced the screams of those in need.

Forgive us, we pray.
Free us from our sin,
Free us from our captivity,
Free us to a life lived in Joy
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn: STF 212 *John Francis Wade c.1711-1786*)

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.
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord.

2] God of God, Light of Light;
lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb;
very God,
begotten not created;
O come, let us adore him.....

3] Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
in the highest:
O come, let us adore him.....

4] Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning:
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore him.....

Prayers

Holy Jesus,
by being born one of us,
and lying humbly in a manger,
you show how much God loves the world.
Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,
until we reach our home in heaven,
and see you on your throne of glory. Amen

Christ, for whom there was no room in the inn,
give courage to all who are homeless;
in your mercy - hear our prayer.

Christ, who fled into Egypt,
give comfort to all refugees;
in your mercy - hear our prayer.

Christ, who fasted in the desert,
give relief to all who are starving;
in your mercy - hear our prayer.

Christ, who hung in agony on the cross,
give strength to all who suffer;
in your mercy - hear our prayer.

Lord of the Church - hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Readings:

Matthew 1.18-21

The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost: and she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins. (Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.) Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the

Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name Jesus.

Luke 2:41-52

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Hymn: STF 214 Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)

1] Once in royal David's city
stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby
in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that Mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.

2] 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.

3] And through all his wondrous childhood
he would honour and obey,
love and watch the lowly Maiden,
in whose gentle arms he lay:
Christian children all must be
mild, obedient, good as he.

4] Not in that poor lowly stable,
with the oxen standing by,
we shall see him; but in heaven,
set at God's right hand on high;
where like stars his children crowned
all in white shall wait around.

Reflection

It seems odd to be writing this a fortnight *before* Christmas, knowing that by the time this is read Christmas will be over; let's re-phrase that – Christmas Day will have come and gone, and nowadays for many, it seems, that is Christmas done for another year. When I was a child, I lived in a village where the parson insisted that the Church carol service was not held until the Sunday after Christmas. Indeed no carols were sung in Advent services, which well I knew as a member of the church choir. It was not until the midnight communion on Christmas Eve that Hark the Herald, O Come all ye faithful and other favourites would resound around the church. We were permitted, though, to carol sing around the village on the for nights prior to Christmas. Times change and this year Radio 3 marked the very first day of Advent with seasonal music most of which was Christmas music. I was not amused as Advent deserves to be observed as a preparation for Christmas, which continues after the 25th. Even the church seems a bit confused with lectionary readings for this Sunday being either one of the Gospel accounts of the Christmas story or a fast-forward to when Jesus was twelve years old; hence my inclusion of two readings this week. But in both cases, we confront the extraordinary

claim of the Christmas story that, not only did God become man, that great mystery of the incarnation, but the 'emptying' was so complete that the Lord of the universe was born as a baby and negotiated childhood:

The Incarnation by Isa Craig Knox

Not in cloud and not in thunder,
Filling all the world with wonder,
Came to earth the Lord of earth;
But with helpless cries and tears,
Mid a mother's pains and fears,
Entered by the gate of birth.

By the way of flesh he came --
How else could he kindred claim?
How else, save life's path he trod,
Coming in the way of breath,
Going out the way of death,
Be himself the way to God?

Living words by prophets spoken,
Hearts with longing well nigh broken,
Expectation in the air;
Blind desire of every nation,
Eyes that waited for salvation,
Coming of the Son declare.

Thus he came, our new beginning,
For the death doom of our sinning,
Giving us God's life again:
Then a bright new star shone o'er us,
Then began that heavenly chorus,
'Peace on earth, good will to men.'

Surely, we cannot leave such a story to Christmas Day alone – the season of Christmas deserves more reflection than that – twelve days perhaps! So a very Happy Christmas to you all and I encourage you to keep saying that to others for the 12 days. It may raise eyebrows, but it may also prompt questions about the true meaning of Christmas.

The Collect

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen

Hymn: STF 215 *Edward Caswall (1814-1878)*

1] See amid the winter's snow
Born for us on earth below
See the tender Lamb appears
Promised from eternal years
Hail, thou ever blessed morn
Hail, redemption's happy dawn
Sing through all Jerusalem
Christ is born in Bethlehem

2] Lo, within a manger lies
He who built the starry skies;
He who throned in height sublime
Sits amid the cherubim.

3] Hail, thou ever blessed morn
Hail, redemption's happy dawn
Sing through all Jerusalem
Christ is born in Bethlehem

4] Sacred infant, all divine
What a tender love was thine
Thus to come from highest bliss
Down to such a world as this

5] Hail, thou ever blessed morn
Hail, redemption's happy dawn
Sing through all Jerusalem
Christ is born in Bethlehem

Prayer of Blessing

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas.