

Christ Church, Ipswich,

Sunday 27th December 2020

with Peter Dawson.

Opening words.

Jesus, you are a light shining in the darkness, a beacon of hope. Help us to respond to your birth at this Christmastime and in the coming year.

Opening Carol. R&S 169 Unto us a child is born.

Unto us a child is born!
King of all creation,
came He to a world forlorn,
the Lord of every nation.

Christ from heaven descending low
comes, on earth a stranger;
ox and ass their Owner know,
becradled in the manger.

Herod then with fear was filled:
"A prince", he said, "in Jewry!";
all the little boys he killed
at Bethlem in his fury.

Now may Mary's son, who came
so long ago to love us,
lead us all with hearts aflame
unto the joys above us.

Omega and Alpha he!
Let the organ thunder,
while the choir with peals of glee
doth rend the air asunder.

German carol, 15th cent
Tr (v. 1 & 3-5) Percy Dreamer (1867-1936)
(V.2) G.R. Woodward (1848-1934)

Welcome and Introduction.

Thank you for inviting me to "talk" to you on this first Sunday after Christmas. I hope you have managed to meet up with your loved ones despite all the challenges at the moment. I wish you all a continuing Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year.

For the last few weeks during Advent we have been thinking about and speaking about Jesus, the child born in Bethlehem. Have we been so wrapped up with the Christmas story of the little Lord Jesus "asleep on the hay"; "no crying He makes"?- maybe an unreal impression of the baby Jesus and have we, maybe, not taken on board the awesomeness of the event we have just celebrated - Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God on earth, Saviour of the World, the Lord of Life.

We may have been swept along by the frippiness of presents, food decorations.....great as they are. Are we completely aware that at this time of the year, we should renew our spiritual lives and make a renewed commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ?

To fall short of this understanding is to miss the real meaning of Christmas and the purpose of Christian teaching. Now, as the glimmerings of Advent and Christmas gradually pass, the Light of the World now shines clearly and the time for action has come.

Prayer

Prince of Peace,
Jesus, Servant Lord;
come into our lives today.

Let Your coming be glorious in us,
and its light go on increasing.
filling the world
till joy bursts like balloons
and bangs like crackers, full of gifts;
love, justice, truth, peace, health;
with singing and delight
rushing through the Universe.
Bring us with You
where we shall praise the Lord of Hosts,
Eternal Love in Trinity,
with You and the Holy Spirit,
the light shining for us,
and our joy eternally increasing.
Amen.

Carol R&S 177 Once there came to earth.

Once there came to earth
a child of lowly birth;
far from home the tiny stranger
lay contented in a manger,
Jesus came to earth.

Little Jesus grew,
joy and grief He knew,
when He reached His manhood glorious,
over sin He lived victorious,
strong in love He grew.

Then Himself He gave,
all the world to save,
sin and strife and hatred slew Him,
only those who loved Him knew Him,
Jesus strong to save.

Jesus still can bind
in love all humankind.
To the manger humbly kneeling
still they come for help and healing
weary humankind.

Now let people sing
"Praise to God" we bring.
"Peace on earth", we hail the blessing
sent from heaven for our possessing,
Jesus, Saviour, King.

Bible Reading. Colossians 3 vs 12-17.

You are the people of God; He loved you and chose you for His own. So then you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. The peace that Christ gives us is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. Christ's message in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct each other with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through Him to God the Father. Amen.

Reflection

We as individuals need to show Jesus to others in the coming New Year and what He means to us, our communities and others. On a simple and basic level, we can witness for Jesus in our families, in our local community, through our Church and in everyday life. We can speak out for worthwhile and just causes. We need to make a positive response to the Christmas message; we must reach forward. We must ask ourselves "where are our lives going?" "Are we going to rise to the challenges in our society?"

God spoke to the Wise men; He spoke to Joseph in a dream about the dangers of Herod; Isaiah had a vision of God's glory. They had vision. We, too, must have vision as we look forward into the New Year.

You may be looking forward with dread - when is this pandemic going to end? Will my family be ok?. We do not always understand what God wants for us. We must listen to God and His purpose; we must have a spiritual hunger to enable us to put God's work through Jesus Christ, into action.

I mentioned that Joseph was warned in a dream about the dangers Herod posed. He, Mary, Jesus, the Wise men, they showed courage. As we respond to the Christmas message, even if we are finding life difficult and uncomfortable, we, too, need courage. In our lives, in the coming year we will face the inevitabilities of life - accidents, heartache, bad health, even death - these are stark, grim facts of human experience. Society is, at times, chaotic and even evil, violent and hateful. These facts seem to negate life. It is then when we need to show courage and an inner resolution to go forward. As Christians we must never lose that zest for life based on Jesus' teaching.

So, we need Vision; we need Courage.

We also need Humility. Consider the birth of Jesus and how God worked through ordinary, humble surroundings concerning the Christmas story. A great drama of God's rescue plan for mankind, was played out in an ordinary village, a stable with a peasant family being visited by tough, outspoken shepherds. God chose ordinary lives.

Who knows what God is currently doing in our ordinary lives? - we must be humble and reach out to our communities to show that something special happened on Christmas Day; we have something special to say that kindness, care, fairness, justice and love are the bedrock qualities to us as Christians.

Above all the qualities of Vision, Courage, Humility, we must show Love. In our personal lives, a kind word, a smile, a word of encouragement. a charitable deed. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit which speaks out in all we do.

A light came into our world at Christmas. We must now put that Christian message into action by moving forward with Vision, Courage, Humility and Christian Love.

Amen

Prayers and Lord's Prayer.

Gracious Father, we bless You. Thank you for being the King of glory. Thank you for being our Father, Redeemer, Shepherd and King. Thank you for Your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

You are the Alpha and Omega. the beginning and the end. We submit our loyalty and adoration to You.

Teach us, Lord, how to love You. Touch the hearts of those who do not know You. Remind us each day, Lord, of the many things You do for us; help us to increase our praise and adoration.

Forgive us, Lord, for sins, disobedience, selfishness, hatred and idolatry. Forgive us for half-hearted worship.

Today we come to You and we lay our lives before You. As we worship You through hymns, carols, prayers and words, may everything within us cry, "Holy is the Lord, God Almighty who was and is and is to come."

Lord, we thank You for this Church, Christ Church, for the Minister, the Deacons, all Office -bearers, all who love this Church. We thank You for communities, for families, for friends, for strangers, for children, for this day, for justice, for peace.

We pray for the broken, the lost, those without shelter, for the lonely, the depressed, those who are mourning. Lord, we all walk in darkness at times but now we pray, at this Christmas time, that we experience light and joy. We welcome Jesus Christ, as a child, accepting His authority, embracing His peace and committing ourselves to His Kingdom.

Lord, as we approach a New Year, protect us through these challenging, difficult times. We hear the call Jesus makes to us to serve Him. Help us to hear that call and to play our part bringing love to our world.

We pray these things through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.

Closing carol. R&S 144. It came upon the midnight clear.

It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold;
"Glory to God!" On earth be peace,
from heaven's all gracious King;
the world in solemn stillness lay
to hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

3. Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long,
beneath the angel-strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and we, at bitter war, hear not
the love song which they bring;
O, hush the noise and end the strife,
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4. For lo! the days are hastening on
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E. H. Sears (1810-76)

Blessing.

Let the song of the angels ring in our hearts;
May it never be silenced as long as we live.
May love flood our hearts,
and joy, peace and justice give us hope.

Now may the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us now and forever more.

Amen.

The Grace

Holding each other in our prayers, we say together:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
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above its sad and lowly plains
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

3. Yet with the woes of sin and strife
the world has suffered long,
beneath the angel-strain have rolled
two thousand years of wrong;
and we, at bitter war, hear not
the love song which they bring;
O, hush the noise and end the strife,
to hear the angels sing.

4. For lo! the days are hastening on
by prophet bards foretold,
when with the ever-circling years
comes round the age of gold;
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and all the world give back the song
which now the angels sing.

E. H. Sears (1810-76)

Blessing.

Let the song of the angels ring in our hearts;
May it never be silenced as long as we live.
May love flood our hearts,
and joy, peace and justice give us hope.

Now may the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us now and forever more.

Amen.

The Grace

Holding each other in our prayers, we say together:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all,
for evermore. Amen.**