

Worship at Home Sunday 1st December 2024 with Revd Ian Forsyth

Throughout Advent and Christmas 2024 the Methodist Church is calling us all to 'Hush the Noise.' This phrase is taken from the carol 'It Came Upon the Midnight Clear', and I am using this phrase today for our Worship at home service.

Opening liturgy:

Advent dawns with lights strung high and music everywhere, Sights and smells abound around, Senses assaulted and confused, O hush the noise. **Let's hear the angels sing.**

Amid the lists and cards and gifts, Amid the pleas and "please can we", Amid the chaos of the world, O hush the noise.

Let's hear the angels sing.

Let's seek to see and seek to hear.

Let's seek to feel and seek to know.

Let's seek to find peace and love O hush the noise.

Let's hear the angels sing. Amen.

StF 205 It came upon a 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:

"Peace on the earth, good will to men,
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.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow,
look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.

O rest beside the weary road,
and hear the angels sing!

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muTpm3nv02o>

Bible readings Jeremiah 33 v 14 – 16, Luke 21 v 25 - 36

Reflection Hush the noise:

When I was a Religious Studies teacher, many students would ask me what I wanted for Christmas. I always gave the same answer each year, which was, there is just one thing I would like at Christmas, and that is peace and quiet, something I rarely had! Today there are so many voices telling us how to celebrate at Christmas, what to wear, what to eat and drink, what to watch on TV and what to buy. Instead, this Christmas we're inviting everyone to 'hush the noise' so that we can listen for the love song that the angels bring, year after year. They sang it for the first time more than 2,000 years ago, and it is still relevant today.

Advent is the start of the Church's liturgical calendar, and the main Gospel used in the lectionary is Luke. In this first Sunday in Advent, we begin with a rather cryptic warning that we are going to explore through the lens of hushing the noise.

The picture for the first week of advent is a picture of roaring waves. This text is a continuation of Luke's account of Jesus' speech about the end times, the advent of the Son of Man and the coming of redemption. However, you interpret the Bible .the roaring of the sea and the waves... give us a picture of power and noise. Over the years I have spent time watching the sea and how a storm can impact on the waves.

Waves can be calming but also devastating, causing chaos, destroying homes, infrastructure and leaving people without homes, feeling lost and confused.

Today we can make the connection to the theme of this week to hush the noise around us. Jesus encourages us to note the chaos around us, and rather than being overwhelmed by it, to respond to it in a way that recognises what is truly important. In that way the noise is, in effect, hushed.

Dr Andrew Root (a theologian interested in ministry, culture and younger generations) writes that we are in a time of unprecedented contemporary cultural acceleration. We see this in rapid changes in technology, in changing social ethics, and in the general pace of life speeding up. Root claims that this causes disorientation, since we cannot realistically keep up with all the changes around us, it leads to alienation and depression; a state of uncertainty brought on this roaring sea of contemporary change. For Root, drawing on the work of sociologist Hartmut Rosa, the answer is to seek moments of 'resonance': times when we feel connected to our bodies, to our friends and to God.

It is my prayer during this advent we might seek to take time as the writer of Psalm 46 and verse 10 reminds us to, 'be still and know that I am God'.

In this advent season may we be gentle, kind, taking time to remind ourselves that we can worship our Lord through all the noise going on around us.

In conclusion for today's worship at home there is a Christmas prayer by Catherine Marshall. The final hymn I have chosen is from a group called Rend Collective who wrote a song called 'My Lighthouse.' Below is one of the verses reminding us that God is our peace through difficult circumstances. May we use the lines below as a personal prayer during this advent season of 2024.

In the silence, you won't let go in my questions, your truth will hold Your great love will lead me through. You are my peace in the troubled sea,
Songwriters: Chris Llewellyn / Gareth Gilkeson My Lighthouse lyrics © Thankyou Music, Thank You Music Ltd. Amen.

A prayer for Christmas by Catherine Campbell

Majestic Lord, creator of the stars. You set them all in place, ordaining that one would direct the Magi to Bethlehem to welcome, and worship, your son Jesus.

May I seek Jesus with the same fervour, and worship at the feet of the one true King.

Generous God, as I fuss over what gifts to give this Christmas, help me recognise they are but a symbol of what you gave to us ... the gift of heaven's best, born in the simplicity of an eastern stable that we might one day feast at the table of your Kingdom.

May I accept your gift in repentance and faith, determined to make room in my heart for Jesus.

Light of the World, as the twinkle of fairy lights brighten our homes and our high streets, may they remind us that light can piece through the darkness, brighten our way and help us see more clearly.

May I reflect your light Jesus, all year round, illuminating the path for others to find their way to you.

And in it all, receive the thanks of my grateful heart for this special time of the year, planned before time ever began. **Amen.**

My Lighthouse by Rend Collective

In my wrestling and in my doubts
In my failures You won't walk out
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea, oh oh
You are the peace in my troubled sea

In the silence, you won't let go
In the questions, your truth will hold
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea, oh oh
You are the peace in my troubled sea

My Lighthouse, my lighthouse
Shining in the darkness, I will follow You
My Lighthouse, my lighthouse (oh oh)
I will trust the promise,

Please note lyrics have been shortened.

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

A prayer of blessing. The angels are still singing. Hush the noise, hear them sing, repeat the song. And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be yours/ours, now and always. **Amen**