



Worship at home for Sunday 5th January with Local Preacher Jenny Brooks

Call to worship

God, Word of life and being, you are light and hope. You are incarnation, truth and love. Help us to worship you in spirit and in truth.

Hymn StF 272

From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled, not to be served but to serve and gave your life that we might live.
Chorus: This is our God, the Servant King, he calls us now to follow him, to bring our lives an offering of worship to the Servant King.

There in the garden of tears my heavy load he chose to bear: his heart with sorrow was torn, 'Yet not my will but yours', he said.

Chorus

Come see his hands and his feet, the scars that speak of sacrifice, hands that flung stars into space to cruel nails surrendered.

Chorus

So let us learn how to serve and in our lives enthrone him, each other's needs to prefer, for it is Christ we are serving.

Chorus

Prayers of thanksgiving and Lord's Prayer

Almighty God, praise be to you.

We give you thanks for the blessings you have poured out upon us, for the difference you have made to our lives. For gifts beyond measure: not the gold, frankincense and myrrh the wise men brought to Jesus at Epiphany, but gifts of forgiveness way beyond what we deserve, for love everlasting, light in our darkness and hope in our despair.

Almighty God, **praise be to you.**

We give thanks for the constancy of your being, eternal, unchanging, reliable and secure, which grounds us when life around us seems constantly in flux.

Almighty God, **praise be to you.**

We give thanks for the glimpses we catch of you unexpectedly as we go about our daily living. Glimpses in the light and in the dark.

Glimpses that uphold and sustain us.

Almighty God, **praise be to you.**

Amen.

Reading John Chapter 1 v 1-14

Reflection

Johns' gospel is different, which makes it both a joy and a struggle to understand. Tom Wright describes it as like going to visit a friend for the first time, not knowing where they live and being very surprised by the long winding driveway, beautiful gardens and very splendid house at the end of your journey. I cherish these verses at the beginning of Johns gospel as a poetic reminder of what Christmas is really about – incarnation, revelation of God in human form. Not only in one place and time, but for always, for us here and now and all future generations. We often read this portion of the bible during carol services, or at other Christmas services, but like a puppy, John's gospel is for life, not just for Christmas! From the earliest times, the followers of Jesus have seen him as the fulfilment of promises made in the Jewish scriptures that God would send a saviour to the world. In that sense his birth makes those promises 'real'. Our Gospel reading today sums it up succinctly – as a prologue to a great drama should – 'The light shines in the darkness' and 'He was in the world ... yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.' Some translations of the ending of verse five say the darkness did not 'comprehend' the light. There was much more work for Jesus to do, and for the Church to do today in making the promise of salvation fully real to the world. Incarnation- becoming the fulfilment of these promises, is a long-term project.

A decisive moment like the birth of Jesus can start the process, but there's a lot more to do and it's only right that this should be clearly stated and that those who wish to see a promise made real should recognise the work involved. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells those who want to be his followers, 'But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?' (Luke 14:28, New Living Translation) The baby Jesus had a difficult journey to travel before the promise he embodied achieved its full reality. And we have work to do in making that promise comprehensible and 'real' to the world in our time.

Hymn StF 440

Amazing grace-how sweet the sound- that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.

God's grace has taught my heart to fear, His grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come; God's grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures; he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

And when this heart and flesh shall fail and mortal life shall cease, I shall possess within the veil a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing Gods praise than when we first begun.

Prayers of confession

Eternal God, as we start this new year,
we confess our failings and our shortcomings.

We confess that so often we pack your challenges away with the Christmas cards and wrapping paper. We do not explore your gift enough, we do not always let it change us, but as you have promised so much to us,

so we promise to try to be the people you want us to be, and to live the best life we can.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Immanuel, God with us, help us to discern your presence in strange and unexpected places. May we see you in the face of the stranger.

May we see you in the face of those we love. May we see you in the face of those who turn away from us. May we see you waiting at the side of the road.

Help us to make space in our lives and in our imaginations, so that the wonder of your presence will never cease to amaze us. As we see our humanity reflected in your story, help us to learn from you what it is to be fully human and made in your image. **Amen**

Hymn StF 176

Like a candle flame, flickering small in our darkness, Uncreated light shines through infant eyes

*Chorus: **God is with us, alleluia. God is with us alleluia. Come to save us alleluia. Come to save us. Alleluia***

Stars and angels sing, yet the earth sleeps in shadows; can this tiny spark set a world on fire?

Chorus

Yet his light shall shine from our lives, Spirit blazing, as we touch the flame of his holy fire.

Chorus

Sending out prayer

As we savour the presents of Christmas and begin to make them part of our lives – things to use, to wear, to play with – so may we savour and use the blessings we have unwrapped in the gift of Jesus and **make his promise real in our lives. Amen.**

