

Worship@Home 4th December 2023 2nd Sunday in Advent with Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

“Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king’s son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.” **Amen.**

Psalm 72:1-4 (NRSVA)

StF 178 - Long ago prophets knew <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S63rjDtYRYg>

Long ago, prophets knew. Christ would come, born a Jew,
come to make all things new; bear his people’s burden,
freely love and pardon:

[Refrain]

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring! Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When he comes, when he comes, who will make him welcome?*

God in time, God in man, this is God’s timeless plan:
He will come , as a man, born himself of woman, God divinely human:

[Refrain]

Mary, hail! Though afraid, she believed, she obeyed.
In her womb, God is laid; till the time expected, nurtured and protected:

[Refrain]

Journey ends! Where afar, Bethlem shines, like a star,
stable door stands ajar. Unborn Son of Mary, Saviour, do not tarry!

*Ring, bells, ring, ring, ring! Sing, choirs, sing, sing, sing!
Jesus comes! Jesus comes! We will make him welcome!*

Fred Pratt Green (1903 – 2000)

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Please read:

Isaiah 11:1-10

<http://bible.oremus.org/?q|=441183496>

Time to Reflect

The reading we have for this Sunday, taken from the Book of Isaiah, comes from a time when the Northern Kingdom of Israel has been invaded and occupied by the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians now present a significant threat to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and its capital city: Jerusalem.

The way this invasion is understood, in the eyes of the prophets, is that it was a result of Israel's failure to obey the covenant with God, by not loving God and by failing to love each other. The injustice suffered by the vulnerable and weak in Israel, alongside the idolatry and greed of those in power, had severely damaged and undermined their society. The invasion was therefore a consequence of their failure in leadership and stewardship; a failure to live out God's commandments.

During the time of the prophet Isaiah a new king emerged in Judah called Hezekiah. Wise, righteous, concerned for justice, and a faithful leader. Many would see the words of Isaiah as applying to this new king. Yet Hezekiah's reign and influence did not extend beyond his lifetime and his reforms did not endure, with the Kingdom eventually falling to Babylonian conquest and exile.

Much later, in Jesus' time, it was the Romans who were the feared occupiers of the Holy Land while the people waited for a messiah who would free them from their oppression. Yet Jesus was not the messiah that they expected, proclaiming an eternal Kingdom that was not of this world. A kingdom with room for everyone that would be open to all who accepted Christ's gracious invitation to become part of it. For those who placed all their trust in Jesus and followed his command to love God and neighbour.

A kingdom that would bring together people from all nations, even the hated enemies of Israel.

Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection Jesus reveals God's love for humanity, forgiveness, mercy, and redemption for all of humanity. He demonstrates that he is the true King above all other kings. The one who Isaiah wrote about who brings about peace, justice, and righteousness for all people. By calling us to be part of his Kingdom Christ asks us to live out, as a community, that righteousness that he himself demonstrates and embodies. To be his inclusive people who declare the coming of his Kingdom.

The Church, a sign of the Kingdom's presence in the here and now, is expected to be a body of people where all can find room and where the vulnerable on the margins of society are empowered and supported. This is why, during this Advent season, the Methodist Church is encouraging us to reflect on what it means to say 'there is room' for all people.

When the infant Christ is born in Bethlehem he has two sets of visitors. Luke's Gospel records how shepherds watching sheep in the fields around David's city are summoned by angels to the stable. Matthew records how magi from a distant land cross vast distances to pay homage to Jesus. Here we have Jesus becoming the king to poor shepherds and foreign wise men to show that his birth was making room for all people.

As we travel through the Advent season, and towards Christmas, perhaps now is the time when we must consider what it means to make room for Jesus and for others. How does the coming of Christ into our lives change the way that we relate to our neighbours near and far? How does Jesus' coming help us to walk in the way of mercy, forgiveness, justice, righteousness, peace, and love? How can we live out Jesus' commandments to love all people, even our enemies? May God, by the help of the Holy Spirit, enable us to live lives worthy of our saviour, friend, and King: Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:

The needs of the world...
The Church and its calling...
Loved ones going through difficult times...
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...
In Jesus name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven...

STF 169 – Come thou long expected Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVl33j--eT8>

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.

Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788).

Final Prayer

Christ the Sun of Righteousness
shine upon us and prepare our hearts and souls to meet him when he
comes in glory;
and the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be ours, now and always. **Amen.**

The day of the Lord is surely coming.
Be faithful in worship, unwavering in hope,
fervent in the work of God's kingdom
and all the more as you see the day drawing near. **Amen. Come, Lord
Jesus.**

Advent Liturgy, Methodist Worship Book © 1999.

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