

Worship@Home 25th December 2022 **Christmas Day with Revd David Speirs**

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, on the Christmas Day we give praise and thanks for your Son, Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem to be the saviour of the world. As we worship you today help us to make room for Jesus in our lives and share his love in the joyful Christmas season. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

StF 212 - O come all ye faithful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfRubAv0NwE>

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!

True God of true God, Light of Light eternal,
lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created:

[Refrain]

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, leaving their flocks,
draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps:

[Refrain]

Lo, star-led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring,
offer him incense, gold, and myrrh; we to the Christ-child bring our hearts'
oblations:

[Refrain]

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above:

'Glory to God in the highest.'

[Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be glory given:

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:

[Refrain]

John Francis Wade (c. 1711–1786)

Please read:

Luke 2:1-20

<http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Luke+2:1-20&version=nrsv>

Time to Reflect

The nativity is one of the most familiar stories that we have in the New Testament. In December, in schools and churches across the nation, children will have taken part in nativity plays which tell how the infant baby Jesus came into the world. This mass participation in a biblical narrative, which I also took part in during my childhood at various points (as a shepherd, magi, and an angel), means that few people are unaware of what the Christmas story is.

However, when you read Luke's Gospel there might be few surprises for those who have exclusively relied on school nativity plays for their knowledge. For instance, there is no mention of a donkey carrying Mary or an inn keeper telling the couple that there is no room. There are no magi in Luke's account, this being found in Matthew's Gospel. The presence of animals is implied by Jesus being placed in the manger, but we are not told anything about them either. Recently I saw a number of pig and piglet figurines being sold as part of a nativity set. For obvious reasons, they would not have been present on that particular night!

Yet even those of us who are very familiar with Luke's biblical account can be drawn in to certain romantic sentimentalism when it comes to the birth of Jesus. We need to be reminded that Jesus came into the world not at a 'glitzy' time but in a very difficult period for the Jewish people. With their land being occupied by a foreign power and ruled over by an oppressive tyrant, King Herod, a puppet of the Roman Empire, the people were longing for a saviour. Yet despite the gloomy context what shines through in the birth narrative is the joy and hope that Jesus' coming brings to those who welcome him, particularly those at the very bottom of the social strata: The Shepherds. These are the first people, outside of the holy family, who learn of the birth of Jesus and they are also the first to go out and share the good news Luke's account is a reminder that Jesus came into the world to bring good news to the poor,

the downtrodden, and the outcast.

As his mother Mary declared, in her song known as the Magnificat:

“He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.” (Luke 1:52-53)

Jesus comes as a King, but as very different king from the one who ruled from the palace in Jerusalem or the imperial court in Rome. Instead, Jesus came to bring hope to a broken and hurting world, turning our sorrow into joy through his self-sacrificing love. He comes as a King who is not only for the lowly but is one of them, having taken the form of a servant amongst us.

Sometimes the glitz and the glamour of the Christmas season can be off-putting, especially when it does not reflect the real world challenges that we are facing. The biblical account reminds us that Jesus came into the world at a hard time so that God in Christ might be amongst us to offer us the light of his presence. Christ came to break down the barriers we create between us and God, to offer healing, wholeness, and forgiveness to a hurting world. To bring peace and to fulfil God’s promises, opening up the Kingdom to us. Most of all to bring us joy! That is what the incarnation is all about: God with us and God for us.

When I remember the nativity plays I participated in as a child it gives me joy that I was part of the story. However, the most wonderful thing is that through the birth of Jesus, God becomes part of our story to set us free and give us the greatest gift. So may you find joy this Christmas season and be blessed by the Lord as we celebrate Christ’s birth and presence with us.

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 202 – Hark the herald angels sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Av3Cq5blfZk>

Hark! The herald-angels sing
glory to the new-born King,
peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim:
'Christ is born in Bethlehem.'

*Hark! The herald-angels sing
glory to the new born King.*

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail, the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel
[Refrain]

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788).

Final Prayer

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in deepest night, are lit up with a brilliant sight. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. The spread of his influence and of his peace will never end. Therefore, go out into the world with great joy, and the grace of Bethlehem's matchless Child, the love of the God who never ceases to amaze, and the fellowship of the Spirit who never wearies, will be with you this holy night and evermore.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Based on Isaiah 9:2-7 and written by Bruce Prewer, the Uniting Church in Australia.

<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/11/christmas-benediction.html>