

Christmas Day Circuit Service 2020 Prepared by Deacon Linda Kinchenton

Beyond the Margins

Candle Liturgy:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. ***Those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined.*** Our Advent journey is now complete. The darkness is gone. The Light of the World is here! ***Our hope has been met. Our preparations are done. Our joy has been fulfilled. The love of God has come to live among us. And so, today, we light the candle of Christ.***

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. The long-awaited Christ has come! ***Celebrating the birth of our Saviour, we light this candle. Together, we will shine with the radiant light of Christ!***

Hymn: 202 - Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

1. 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.' <i>Hark! The herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King.</i>	3. Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth: <i>Hark! The herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King.</i>
2. 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: <i>Hark! The herald-angels sing glory to the new-born King.</i>	Charles Wesley (1707-1788) Performed by Emu Music and used with permission https://youtu.be/l_7yhCWRFMw

We come today to celebrate an event at the very heart of our faith – The coming of Christ into our world as the word made flesh. Let the Christmas story speak afresh to us, and that our lives may be touched by Jesus again. Like the shepherds, we have been getting on with our ordinary lives in these extra-ordinary times, yet we come to remember the splash of God's glory, breaking into the humdrum of our everyday lives. Let us listen once more to how God came to dwell among us. God chose to live among the poor, the ordinary and even the outcasts of society. Let us listen once more to some of the events of that first Christmas, the first nativity, when God came to dwell among us, to challenge today's comfortable assumption that the rich/poor divide is okay.

Opening Prayers:

Let us pray, Loving God, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, your word, made human, we lift our praises from our hearts.

The lights and presents and decorations around our town and in our homes help us to praise you and thank you for coming into the world in person.

And so, this morning, as we come before the Christ child, as we kneel before the infant once more, we adore him like the shepherds, we worship him with the wise men, we love him as Mary and Joseph did.

And we wonder afresh at the 'word made flesh', and we bow before the mystery, as we sing glory to God with the angels

joining together in glorifying and praising you.

As we recall today how you entered your world, and the world did not know you.

How you came to your own people, and they would not receive you.
 From the beginning, it was the same old story – your love rejected, your grace ignored.
 We know we are no better, each of us guilty of spurning your guidance, forgetting your goodness and abandoning your way.
 Lord have mercy on us and teach us to receive you with gladness.
 We thank you that you never give up on us and still reach out to us in love. We thank you that you are always ready to offer a fresh start, a new beginning. In Jesus's name. Amen.

John 1:1-14

The introduction to John's gospel helps us to see the extraordinary depth of the meaning of Jesus' birth, of how God, in Jesus leaves heaven and is born among us to live among us as the light of God. Put up tent with children. John tells us that Jesus came to live among us. The actual Greek used says he came to put up his tent among our tents.

- ¹In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²From the very beginning the Word was with God. ³Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. ⁴The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.
- ⁶God sent his messenger, a man named John, ⁷who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. ⁹This was the real light—the light that comes into the world and shines on all people.
- ¹⁰The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him. ¹²Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children. ¹³They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.
- ¹⁴The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.

Reflection: Interruption By Ruth Gee:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"
 And the Word became flesh and interrupted us:
 Interrupted our complacency, alerting us to our need;
 Interrupted our certainty, unfolding God's mystery;
 Interrupted our independence, inviting us into
 relationship;
 Interrupted our violence, offering love;

Interrupted our noise with the songs of angels,
 with a man's dream,
 with a woman's blood and tears,
 with a baby's cry.
 Interruption of grace
 into a world in need.

Carol: It came upon a midnight Clear/Silent Night Medley

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.	1. Silent night, holy night All is calm, all is bright Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child Holy infant so tender and mild Sleep in heavenly peace Sleep in heavenly peace	2. Silent night, holy night Shepherds quake at the sight Glories stream from heaven afar Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia Christ the Saviour is born Christ the Saviour is born
Josef Mohr (1792–1848). Sung by Welwyn Harmony used with permission https://youtu.be/N7P_EnNddaE		

Luke 2: 4-12

⁴Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. ⁵ He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, ⁶ and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. ⁷ She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger—there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

⁸ There were some shepherds in that part of the country who were spending the night in the fields, taking care of their flocks. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone over them. They were terribly afraid, ¹⁰ but the angel said to them, “Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. ¹¹ This very day in David's town your Saviour was born—Christ the Lord! ¹² And this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Talk 1: The rich and the poor

At the birth of Jesus, we are told of the special visitors Jesus had. Some of the visitors were later in arriving and represent the Magi, the wise men from the east, who were wealthy and brought the holy family expensive gifts. They were probably rich because they were born into a wealthy family and had time to study and become wise, especially in the study of the stars and their meanings. They were important visitors to the baby Jesus, because they recognised his specialness.

The most important visitors at Jesus' birth were the shepherds. Shepherds were poor, and probably smelly too, as they cared for their sheep out in the open on the hills around Bethlehem. They worked hard for the little they had. Yet, they left all they had, the sheep, to the dangers of the night, the wolves and other wild animals, and went to see the new baby king. They took nothing with them as a gift, although sometimes we like to think their offering was a lamb. Yet, they were the first, after Mary and Joseph, to see baby Jesus, the new infant king.

They were important because God did not choose the rich or famous to carry to birth and nurture his son, for Mary and Joseph were poor too. God chose to come into the world not through the affluent or powerful but through the poor, the ordinary and the looked-down upon. He wanted them, the ordinary and poor folk, to witness the hope born among them on that dark night and in those dark times. If Jesus was to be born today, I wonder who he would come today? Who are the poor and the ordinary today?

Luke 1:51-53

He (God) has displayed strength with his arm, scattering the proud with their airs and graces. He has caused the powerful to fall from their thrones and has sent away the rich empty....

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

God chose the foolish of this world in order to shame the wise, the weak to discomfit the strong, the lowest and the despised – those considered nothing – to quash those who consider themselves something, so that nobody may boast before him.

Talk 2:

Earlier we were talking about the rich poor divide. Happily, the idea that some people are superior to others simply by their birth or wealth holds less sway today, but it is still there. The events of the nativity challenge such a comfortable assumption. God chose to come among the poor of the world. As Jesus ministry is seen in the gospels, especially in the gospel of Luke, the emphasis is that Jesus came to save the least, the last and the lost of this world; those socially outcast.

When we look around our neighbourhoods, our towns and cities and even our world this Christmas, who are the least, the last and the lost of society today?

Some are easy to be seen, like the homeless or in pictures and videos on our TV news and newspapers, but many are hidden from sight. Even here among our neighbours this morning. Each one of us will have had dark times in our lives or are still going through dark times.

Jesus came as a tiny baby, as light for the whole world many years ago, but he still comes today to those whose lives are full of darkness. The nativity story reminds us that God, came to earth and pitched his tent among us, so that he could fully understand our darkness. He was and is concerned for the ordinary people, those of us who are the least, the last and the lost of this world. The message of Christ this Christmas, as it was then, is that Jesus came into this world, into real situations as the light of the world. Amen

Prayers of Intercessions:

Let us pray, Father, we rejoice and sing for you love us with a great love. We give thanks to you for the coming of Jesus

Into our world and into our lives. Let us enjoy your presence with us, And the love you offer us in Jesus our Lord. We thank you for all who celebrate Christmas, for all who are worshipping in churches and in their homes, all around the world and for all who acknowledge your presence and love.

We remember all those whose lives are darkened by fear, this Christmas.

Jesus, light of the world. **Come scatter the darkness.**

We ask for peace on earth and good will among all peoples. We remember before you all who suffer from war or violence.

Jesus, light of the world. **Come scatter the darkness.**

We remember all those without a roof over their heads this Christmas.

Jesus, light of the world. **Come scatter the darkness.**

We remember those who we love and are not with us, those far away and those who have died. We lift before you those who are grieving this Christmas.

Jesus, light of the world. **Come scatter the darkness.**

We pray that Jesus, the light of the world may shine brightly in our lives and in the lives of those we love.

Merciful Father, **Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

Lord's prayer: We say the prayer Jesus taught us in the style and language we prefer.

Carol: 212 O come all ye faithful

1. 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:	2. God of God, Light of Light eternal, Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb; Son of the Father, begotten, not created:	6. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born for our Salvation Jesus, to thee be glory given: Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
<i>O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!</i>	5. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation, sing, all ye citizens of heaven above: 'Glory to God in the highest:'	Latin, 18th century, possibly by John Francis Wade (c. 1711-1786) and others Performed by Emu Music https://youtu.be/-I_bVsK-MxE used by permission.

Blessing:

God of Mary and Joseph, God of the shepherds and the wise men, God of the baby lying in the manger, God with us.

Touch our hearts with the living presence of Christ.

Fill us with the love and joy, which he alone can bring.

And send us out into our communities to proclaim his kingdom, here on earth, in his name, we pray. Amen