

Earlsdon Methodist Church

6th December 2020

Advent Liturgy 2 CLEAN-UP CREW

Readings Isaiah 40:1-11

Our lists are long, even in this strange mess where we live these days. And we want to do it right, we want to be safe, but we want to be able to enjoy the season. We've got work to do to put right what has gone wrong, to heal what is broken, to mend the relationships, and to prepare for the company that will come.

The prophet Isaiah reminded us that there is work to be done. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." When God comes in, then healing is to be found, but we need to make the way; we need to open the door into our lives.

We light these two candles as a sign of our faith that the God we worship is not far from us and that we can clear the way for that God to come and dwell with us. We light these candles in faith that company is coming.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel.

Hymn 169 Come, thou long expected Jesus,

Prayer

O come, faithful God, who empowers the weak, who encourages the fearful, who enlightens the blind, who intones the deaf, who energizes the lame, who emancipates the speechless, who enriches the poor, who invigorates the dead; O come, faithful God, come and enable us, right now, to worship you, and work for your Kingdom, filled with your strength, your hope, your vision, your melody, your motivation, your Word, your inheritance, your Life.

Lord Jesus forgive us when we live our lives without trusting in your promise that you will come again. Help us to be watchful and prayerful, and living in such a sense of expectation that we

use our time modelling our lives on your example. Help us to hear afresh the challenge of John the Baptist to make our lives ready for your coming. May we be filled with an expectancy which causes us to make ourselves ready for your coming and for you to make your home with us. We seek afresh to straighten our crooked paths and may our lives be holy places fit for our King. In his name we pray. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Advent Faith

During this period in the Christian calendar we prepare ourselves to celebrate Jesus Christ coming to this world in order to redeem us all. We are preparing for the coming of Jesus by moving through Advent. In these we see that Jesus came with a purpose and we discover that he is our faith, our peace, he is love, and that he is our hope.

Advent is a Latin word meaning arrival, appearance, or coming. When we speak about the first advent of Jesus we refer to his birth. When we speak about the Second Advent we refer to Jesus' glorious return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Since we are all created in the image of God it follows that no baby born is unimportant or ordinary. Every baby is unique and special to his or her parents and family. Jesus was equally special to Mary and Joseph, but even more so to God, his true father. We need to remember however, that Jesus was God himself, in the flesh, in human form who walked on the earth to bring us all back to the Father.

As members of the Methodist Church we have all confessed our faith in Jesus Christ. On this second Sunday of Advent we consider how Christ is our faith. The second candle in our advent wreath is the candle representing faith.

During Advent we recognise that there were those surrounding the manger and the birth of Christ who had their faith tested. Mary and Joseph certainly had their faith tested; imagine

what it must have been like looking for a place to stay for the night in a crowded town and having a pregnant wife who is about to deliver a baby. They needed shelter, they needed a decent meal, they needed rest and they needed the help and support of others that comes with giving birth.

Joseph was betrothed to Mary. They were not married yet, not living together, and had no physical relations. Yet he exercised faith. He believed the angel of the Lord and did as the angel directed. Jesus brings faith. Joseph was exercising his faith by being sure of what he hoped for and certain of what he could not see. (see Hebrews 11:1) When we believe in the power of God, although we cannot see him, we have faith. Jesus is our faith. We cannot see him but have hope knowing for certain that he lives. And that should be evidenced in our daily lives.

The birth of Jesus, the promised Messiah was prophesied throughout the Old Testament. It took faith for people to believe that one day, perhaps not in their lifetime, but one day, the long-awaited Saviour of the world would come to Earth. Read again Isaiah 11:1-10. The people of the Old Testament put their faith in the coming Messiah. You and I can put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who has already come, lived among humankind, and is coming again to take his people home.

We like to see the Christmas crib with its figures of the principal characters in the nativity. The baby Jesus is only a carved piece of wood or a shaped piece of clay - hardly worth the fuss but, it is what that model symbolises that is important. We do not place our faith in wood or clay; our faith lies in the person the figure in the crib represents; a real birth, a real life and death, a real resurrection, a real enthroning.

Faith is reliance, loyalty, or having complete trust in Jesus. People will let us down and make mistakes but Jesus never will. We can put our trust in him. We can have complete faith in him. He is for you, not against you. Jesus is our faith.

I don't know anyone who likes to wait. Whether it is waiting in line, waiting for a package to be delivered, or waiting for a prayer to be answered,

waiting is not something we usually enjoy. What we sometimes forget is that waiting patiently and expectantly is faith. Knowing that Jesus will come (and also believing that he will come again. This is why Advent is so important. Advent is a good time to learn about faith and trust; waiting because this season is all about expressing and experiencing faith well. For the next few weeks we sit on the edge of our seats waiting for God to come to us in Christ and transform our lives with his love. In this process of waiting for Christmas, Advent teaches us lessons about why God sometimes requires a measure of faith.

As you prepare your heart to celebrate the coming of God in the flesh this Christmas season, we encourage you to put your faith in Jesus Christ, the one who is yet to come. I want to encourage you to trust him with your whole heart and allow his truth to penetrate your heart today.

Hymn StF 173 Into the darkness of this world,

Prayers

Creator God,
This year has been different. Easter was different, and next it will be Christmas. We know people's circumstances are constantly changing, that over the course of our lives festivals have always gradually changed. So many changes, Lord, but we wonder why so many all heaped on us in this one year?

We thank you that ten months of concentrated, dedicated work in many countries is being brought to fruition as viable vaccines for Covid19 are discovered and successfully tested.

We thank you that ways are being sought to provide vaccine for distribution in developing Countries.

We thank you that the unprecedented lockdowns across the world are giving the opportunity for fresh, green environment, restarts.

And at the same time we recognise that disasters these lockdowns are causing – the businesses closed; the jobs lost; the lives disastrously

changed by diverted medical attention; the failure of human contact.

We pray – for the dedicated doctors and nurses working to exhaustion, risking their lives, for the church leaders working in unexpected new ways and through unaccustomed media to support others, for those who mourn and those who weep, for the politicians unsure which science is correct; which advisors are right, for elderly family members unable to comprehend the depth and seriousness of the pandemic. for those who are turned into unwarranted scapegoats, for our own families and friends, for ourselves.

While all this goes on, there remains the continuing battle of wars and rumours of wars, violence used against neighbours in word or action, and refugees everywhere. We hold in our prayers those in Ethiopia and Sudan, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Nigeria, America and in too many corners of your world. We pray for listening hearts and minds unclouded by fear and fake news. We give thanks for all working to bring peace, truth, reconciliation and justice into our brokenness.

Lord, help us to choose the way of peace and in so doing make a difference for your kingdom.

Hymn StF 171 Hark the glad sound!

The Blessing

May God himself, the God of peace, make you perfect and holy, and keep you safe and blameless, in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all whom you love, now and forever. Amen.