

CHRISTMAS DAY

2020

CB

CALL TO WORSHIP

Jesus is born to change our darkness to light;

the light from the stable has become the Light of the World.

Jesus is born to change our sadness to joy;

the joy of the shepherds still echoes down the years.

Jesus is born to give hope to the oppressed;

God's love within a persecuted family inspires us.

Jesus is born!

**And we rejoice that on this day of all days,
we can come and worship!**

Opening Prayer Jesus: Saviour praise

The waiting is over; God's Anointed One is here!

We will praise God for the coming of Jesus Christ.

The journey is over; Mary's son is born!

We will praise God for the gift of a Savior.

Darkness is overcome; light blazes from the lowly stable.

We will praise God, for hope alive in a tiny child.

Conflict is overcome; there is calm over the whole earth.

We will praise God, for the One who brings peace.

HYMN 306 Christians awake

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fL-7g7QeFb0>

ADVENT CANDLES

Lighting The Christ Candle

We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness – on them a light has shined.

You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

He is also called Emmanuel, for in him God is with us.

TIS 286 Light one candle

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFQZ7DK_GEE

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

God of new beginnings,

we praise and worship you this day,

for here we experience the fullness of your presence.

For the gift of new life in Christ,

we give you thanks.

For the promise that you will never leave us,

we give you thanks.

For your strengthening Spirit

who guides us in life,

we give you thanks.

For the joy of knowing you,

we give you thanks.

For all that you are,

we offer our praise and adoration.

Holy God,

on this most holy of days,
when the fullness of your creative essence
was let loose in the world,
we pause to reflect on the quality of our own lives.

In Christ we see your loving kindness.

Help us to be like Jesus.

In Christ we see faith lived in fullness.

Help us to be like Jesus.

In Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and
all who faithfully played their parts in
the birth of the one who would lead us to salvation,
we find examples that bring true peace.

Help us to be like Jesus.

Gracious God, we acknowledge that
it is not enough to merely celebrate Jesus' birth.
Today we ask that our minds, hearts and action
may be transformed by the indwelling of your Spirit.

Help us to be like Jesus. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

In Christ is the assurance of mercy.

I declare to all,

our sins are forgiven.

LUKE 2:1-14

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.³ All went to their own towns to be registered.⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem,

because he was descended from the house and family of David.⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child.⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.”¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

HYMN TIS 313 Good Christians all rejoice

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJFrBkALs2E>

LUKE 2:15- 20

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

HYMN TIS 318 Away in a manger

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnwO_0DrpCk

SERMON

So many of the images of Christmas that bombard us at this time of year are so overused that they become clichés. We can be so caught up in surviving the season that we miss the reason for the season.

A few years ago I was told this story which for me draws out the centrality of Luke’s message for us today. I will relate the in the first person as this is how it was told to me. I think that it comes from Melbourne.

A few weeks ago I was driving home from work during peak hour. Suddenly before me a wonderful scene unfolded before my eyes. A little baby lost his blankey. It was bright pink with little white dots. As the baby's mother was rushing across the pedestrian crossing the baby squirmed to try and reach his faithful blankey. It landed right in the middle of the crossing without the mother realising the drama unfolding on her shoulder. The mother was rushing as the walk signal on the crossing was now flashing red and the lights would soon change to allow the traffic to once again move through the intersection.

The tram which the mother was rushing to catch was about to close its doors and the mother was desperate to get onboard. The tram would leave the stop as soon as the traffic lights changed.

It was one of those surreal situations, almost as if everything was moving in slow motion. That blankey would soon be yet another piece of rubbish torn apart by the tyres of the cars running over it. The tram would quickly take the crying baby and its mother along the way to their destination. The movements of the world would so quickly destroy that child's security.

It is what happened next that became a spectacle that lasts in people's memory. A car on the other road stopped on the orange light and the driver hopped out. The mother eventually made it to the tram just as the doors were closing.

However none of the traffic moved. The car driver moved towards the tram and suddenly the tram doors opened again. The mother came rushing out of the tram door still holding her child and rushed back towards where the child has lost its blankey. Standing in the middle of the intersection was the good Samaritan driver holding the child's precious piece of cloth. The mother grabbed the prize and scurried back onto the tram.

It was only then that the traffic started to move again. Everything had seemed to be in suspended animations for the few seconds that it took for the scene to unfold.

That day in the middle of the city the whole world seemed to stop for one little baby. A driver rushing home from the office is crazy enough to hop out of his car and rescue a piece of cloth.

A mother persuades the tram driver to give her a chance to get the precious comforter for her child. Cars which would ordinarily go whizzing through the intersection stopped without being ordered to do so. The tram driver, pressed to make his schedule, waited those extra few seconds. Two chubby arms reached out past the mothers shoulders to grab that precious object.

The whole world stopped for a few moments to care.

When we look at Luke's version of the nativity we see a completely different scenario. There is an ancient town where the people are gathering for a census. A young mother struggles in the late stages of her pregnancy helped by being able to ride on a donkey. There is no doubt that she would have preferred to be at home

with her family to support her. There she would have family to attend to her and her first child birth.

Even as they struggled into Bethlehem there was no suitable accommodation left. Plonked out the back in the scrungy stable with the animals and their feed, this young lady gives birth witnessed to by those animals.

In Luke's version the world continues on its merry way without regard for this momentous event. It is not like they were in a palace with all the comforts that would have flowed from this.

Jesus was born in a stable, a shed, a place where the passing world took no notice. The powerful people of their world, like the Roman Emperor just pushed them around like pawns with no regard for their comfort or immediate needs.

The only visitors that we can see paying homage were a scruffy group of shepherds.

The world did not stop for this birth. Luke clearly points out to us that when the divine entered this world there was no fanfare. The angels summoned some shepherds but not the local leaders from the synagogue! Nor did the people of that town gather to pay homage. That birth went virtually unnoticed. The world was too preoccupied.

The Christmas event does call on us to pause and make way for the divine amidst all the chaos of Christmas sales, parties and then the Boxing Day sales to follow.

We need the peace to connect with the flutter of angel wings and their joyous song welcoming that precious child. We need to take time to care, and to create the space to love without limit, as well as to share the shining light of this special child. We need to follow in the footsteps of God's never ending love and let it shape our lives today and for the rest of time.

Christmas is the time to celebrate the divine breaking through into our every-day world. No matter what else is going on around us it can change our lives with love and grace to counter the destructive impact of hatred and death.

HYMN TIS 303 Hark the herald angels sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqooC4ZG75Y>

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Merciful God,

in Jesus you brought healing and hope to many people.

We ask that, by your Holy Spirit,

that same wholeness may be realised today.

We pray for people whose lives hang in the balance today.

We pray for the many in hospital beds,
clinging to life and in need of healing.

We pray for all for whom this day
is a day of sadness and grief
because they have lost a loved one.

Hold them in your tender care we pray.

We pray for all who will go hungry
or live in fear and isolation
because of the violence and inhumanity of others.

We pray for our world, its leaders and its people.

Let there be peace in every land, O God.

There are many yearnings of our hearts
that we would raise before you this day:
those we know who need your blessing...
the work of our church...
our own lives and service...

Hear the prayers of your people, we pray.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN TIS 299 While shepherds watched their flocks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvegJ3wRLFE>

BENEDICTION

Christ was born amongst us

and bids us to go in his name:

to declare the goodness and justice of God,

the joy of salvation

and the promise of abundant life for all.

May the God of new beginnings

fill our lives with love.

May the call of Christ inspire our service.

May the presence, power and joy

of the Holy Spirit be in our gatherings today.

To the glory of God. Amen.

HYMN TIS 312 Once in royal David's city

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aw6ljbOUaJ4>