

ADVENT Week 1: HOPE

Wednesday 25th November 2020: The first candle is lit for God's People:

Candle 1: God's people are His hope for the future. God puts His trust in those who believe in Him as Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. Those who love God do their best to seek and do what God asks. They meet together to worship Him – study His Word in Scripture to learn about Him – seek to adopt and follow the example of His Son Jesus Christ – and call upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help and guide them in all these things. What God says and Jesus teaches demonstrates the unprecedented love they have for us, encouraging us to live in a manner that honours them both. The hope is that the people of God will then go out into the world and teach others about the True character of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Christ's Church grows through personal relationships, both divine and human, when the people of God live in Truth, justice and righteousness.

Opening prayer: May the Holy Spirit be always with the people of God to inspire; May the sacrificial life and example of Jesus be always forefront in the minds of His followers; may the abundant Love of God, the Father of us all, bless us with faith and hope for the future. **Amen!**

Poem: SPECIAL LOVE ©Janice Morgan-1993

Oh Lord give us a special love,
The kind that comes from our Father above,
A love that is patient, and gentle, and kind,
That respects, and upholds everyone it can find,
Never jealous of others, with envy, and greed,
Not given to boasting of every good deed,
But love that is deeper than a fathomless sea,
Given fully, and freely, to us Lord from Thee.

Oh Lord give us a special love,
The kind that comes from our Father above,
Shedding light on the weary, like summer sunshine,
Giving warmth to the needy, like mulled winter wine,
Supporting, and helping, those weaker than us,
Providing their needs, and not making a fuss,
Hardly noticing if others do us great harm,
But in all things praising, with thanksgiving song.

Oh Lord give us a special love,
The kind that comes from our Father above,
A love supernatural, surpassing all things,
Enabling us to ride on eagles wings,
Not demanding, and touchy, at every turn,
Holding grudges that inside us fester, and burn,
But one that is loyal, devoted, and true,
Committed to serving each other, and You.

Oh Lord give us a special love,
The kind that comes from our Father above,
Rejoicing in truth, hating every injustice,
All lessons of life being put into practice,

Unselfish, and giving, compassionate, and free,
A love such as this Lord, is what we would see,
Shared among all Your people, with warmth un-denied,
Reaching out to all others, to walk by Your side.

Oh Lord give us a special love,
The kind that comes from our Father above,
A love that gives everything, nothing held back,
That empties itself, so that others don't lack,
Reaching out to a friend walking through a great storm,
Offering that rainbow, so friendly and warm,
Going on the same journey as far as they need,
To sow in God's garden His wonderful seed.

Oh Lord give us a special love,
The kind that comes from our Father above,
Unlimited love, overwhelming, and strong,
Unending, undying, lasting all our life long,
A love that can give its most valuable prize,
To suffer and die, we just don't realise,
How can we comprehend such a wonderful love,
That is given to us from our Father above.

CD: Joy to the World: Track 6: Jesus, You are Changing Me *by* Marilyn Baker
4:15minutes – can be found in SF 311

Jesus, You are changing me,
By Your Spirit You're making me like You.

Jesus, You're transforming me,
That Your loveliness may be seen in all I do.

You are the Potter and I am the clay,
Help me to be willing to let You have Your way.

Jesus, You are changing me,
As I let You reign supreme within my heart.

Scripture: Isaiah 7:13-14 *The prophetic promise of HOPE*

¹³Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name Him Immanuel."

Scripture: Luke 1:11-17 *The Advent story begins...*

¹¹Then there appeared to Zechariah an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. ¹³But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with

the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before Him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

CD: Joy to the World: Track 7: All I Want to do is to Bless You (The Father's Song of Love)

By Marilyn Baker – 3:58minutes – can be found on YouTube

All I want to do is to bless you
All I want to do is pour out My love
To show you how dear you are to Me
For Me there is no other
To Me you are the pearl of great price

How I love to be with you
Sharing the hopes and thoughts of My heart
To work with you always close by My side
In harmony together
I cherish you as the apple of My eye

I made you to be in the image of Me
The height of all My creation
Love and beauty are real
Pain and sadness you feel
You can know the thoughts of My heart
We're not meant to live apart

One day you'll know Me completely
Tears and confusion will all melt away
The closeness we'll share is beyond compare
The richness of being together
The joy and peace of everlasting love

Reflection: *Zechariah and God's Promise*

Zechariah could not move, he stood fixed to the spot. Wow! What was that all about? Was that really an angel and where did he come from out of the blue like that? It nearly frightened me half to death! Here I was, carrying out my priestly duties in the tabernacle, quietly praying, when Pow! An angel standing right in front of me; appearing in the middle of all the smoke from the incense burner. It was terrifying, this apparition all shrouded in swirling smoke and shining like a bright star had fallen from heaven. Strange though, when he told me not to be afraid, I sort of calmed down inside, my knees stopped knocking and my hands stopped shaking. A kind of peace washed over me and I became mesmerised by what stood before me. The angel said Elizabeth would become pregnant and we would have a son; he even told me what to name the boy, John. Now I ask you, how could I believe that? We have longed for a family and prayed for years to the Lord for such a blessing but time went by, nothing happened and we resigned ourselves to remaining childless. But, when he spoke, the Angel was so convincing and who or what else could deliver such a message? Has God really answered our prayer and if He has, how on earth am I going to tell Elizabeth? If I tell her, she will not believe me and think I've lost the plot completely. But how can I possibly keep it from her? The Angel's instructions were clear: God wants the boy brought up under the Nazarene vow, but will Elizabeth be able to accept that? After all this time

being barren, then to conceive and bear a child, only to hand him over to others for a strict and somewhat solitary training at their hands, not ours. As if that were not enough, we would have to accept him living in abject poverty, wandering in the wilds, without even a roof over his head. On the one hand it will be a most wonderful blessing to be given a child, but on the other a heavy cup to bear and a bitter drink to swallow when he is taken away. Yet, the angel said the boy will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before he is born, that has to be a good thing! He also said the boy will have the spirit and power of Elijah, now that's something indeed! Was there ever a greater prophet? Our son a great prophet; how can I get my head around that? Our son, destined to be a powerful preacher, who turns people away from their transgressions and back to the One True God. All this before he is even conceived let alone born! Dear God, I pray that You will not burden him with more than he can handle. This all feels surreal, yet, I know it really did happen and Elizabeth is going to be over the moon. Perhaps I'll wait a bit before telling her the whole story, let her rejoice at becoming pregnant first. There will be time enough to come to terms with the rest, I must get home quickly and give her the good news and trust to God that she will accept it.

CD: Joy to the World: Track 10: Rest in My Love *by* Marilyn Baker
4:21minutes – can be found on YouTube

Rest in My love, relax in My care
And know that My presence will always be there
You are My child, and I care for you
There's nothing My love and My power cannot do

Jesus is here, He is alive
And all power is given unto Him
His peace and joy, He gives to you
Brings strength and comfort to your heart

And he says....

Rest in My love relax in My care
And know that My presence will always be there
You are My child and I care for you
There's nothing My love and My power cannot do

Closing Prayer: God's Hope is in His people, whom He calls in every age; God's Son has come to His people and has taught them the ways of His Father; The Spirit of God is in His people to guide them along the right path. The people of God hear His call, they come and they listen and they go where the Lord sends. May all God's people be blessed this day, with faith and wisdom and strength and love, and above all, hope in God's people for the future. **Amen!**

Revd Janice Morgan