



Highcliffe and Bransgore **Methodist** Churches

Sunday 13th December 2020, 10:30am “Advent #3 – Joy” Matthew 1:18-24

Prepared by Rev’d Phillip Dixon and Deacon Paul Wayne.

Welcome to the third Sunday of the Advent season. Advent means ‘a coming’, God coming to His people. Each year the season of Advent provides us, as Christians, with a special opportunity to connect with and celebrate God’s unfolding salvation/rescue plan for us. Advent has us looking in three directions at the same time (not an easy thing to do); looking back to the prophecies of the Old Testament leading to the promised birth of Jesus as Messiah in Bethlehem, looking to the present day and living our lives with God’s salvation transforming us and looking forward to when Jesus will come again in power and glory.



Lighting the Advent Candle:

We light again the first candle in anticipation and feel hope rising up within us. We name it **HOPE**.

We light again the second candle as we choose to be a peaceful presence in the midst of a frantic and anxious world and call it **PEACE**.

For us, God has replaced our mourning with the oil of gladness. We light now this third candle and name it **JOY**.

Advent Hymn: Light a candle in a darkened place StF 174

Sing/read/pray/proclaim.

Light a candle in a darkened place,
in its flame see hope on every face,
Christ our Saviour will be born,
heralding a brand new dawn,
so let it burn.

In the darkness, see the coming light,
Word of God speaks through the darkest night,
keep a watch, the time is near,
time for hope and not for fear,
so let it burn

Stepping through each page of history,
prophets contemplate this mystery,
celebrate the coming King,
words of joy and hope they bring,
so let it burn.

In the desert now the waiting’s done,
make things ready for your King, says
John, see his glory is revealed
and the hope for all is sealed,
so let it burn.

Clare Stainsbury (b 1959)

Each week of Advent a further verse is added.

Opening Prayer:

God of all time and space,
who are we, that you should come to us?
Yet you have visited your people
and redeemed us in your Son.
As we prepare to celebrate his birth,
make our hearts leap for joy at the sound
of your word and move us by your Spirit
to bless your wonderful works.
We ask this through Him whose coming is
certain, whose day draws near. **Amen**

Advent 2 Collect option 2 from MWB

Hymn: Angels from the realms of glory StF 190 Sing/read/pray/proclaim.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDNpOWDCcOA&ab_channel=Koine

Angels from the realms of glory,
wing your flight through all the earth;
heralds of creation's story
now proclaim Messiah's birth!
Come and worship
Christ, the new-born king;
come and worship,
worship Christ the new-born king.

Shepherds in the fields abiding,
watching by your flocks at night,
God with us is now residing:
see, there shines the infant light!
Come and worship
Christ, the new-born king;
come and worship,
worship Christ the new-born king.

Magi, leave your contemplations!
brighter visions shine afar;
seek in him the hope of nations,
you have seen his rising star:
Come and worship
Christ, the new-born king;
come and worship,
worship Christ the new-born king.

Though an infant now we view him,
he will share his Father's throne,
gather all the nations to him;
every knee shall then bow down:
Come and worship
Christ, the new-born king;
come and worship,
worship Christ the new-born king. James
Montgomery (1771-1854) 1-4, v5 unascribed 1825.

Prayer of Confession:

If you Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness.
For with the Lord there is steadfast love
and with him is a great power to redeem.
Psalm 130 verses 3,4 and 7

I offer to You dear Lord my prayers for the
forgiveness of those who have in any way
injured, grieved or reproached me with
their words or actions. And I ask
forgiveness for myself, for those times
when I have in any way injured, grieved or
reproached my brother or sister in Christ
with my words or actions, knowingly or
unknowingly. Forgiving and loving Father,
equally and to the utmost, forgive us all
of our sins and offences against each
other.

Lord, take away from our hearts all
suspicion, indignation, anger and
contention and whatever is calculated to
wound charity and to lessen Christian love
amongst brothers and sisters. **Amen**

*A time of quiet to listen to what God may
be saying to us.*

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has
come to us and offered us a kingdom that
cannot be destroyed, thank you for the
forgiveness of our sins, open our eyes to
Your truth, strengthen us to do Your will
in this Advent season and grant us the
same overwhelming joy as experienced by

the Magi as they came to You, entered in, knelt and worshipped. **Amen.** Confession from Thomas A Kempis (1380-1471) and Absolution adapted from Church of England Common Worship

A Prayer for Joy (Advent 3)

Heavenly Father, in this third week of Advent, let us remember that the good news of Jesus' birth has the power to bring us great joy this Christmas season. Our joy isn't dependent on what is going on in our life, in our world, or the people that we are with. It doesn't depend on the gifts we give or the gifts we find under the tree. No earthly thing can ever give us complete joy. Our joy comes from you. The joy that flooded the hearts of the shepherds, the angels, the wise men, the hosts of heaven, and Mary and Joseph is the joy that still has the power to overwhelm our hearts with rejoicing.

Those who knew him and recognized him were overjoyed at the coming of Jesus. They saw the prophecies fulfilled and their fear was replaced with happiness as they gazed on the face of the one who would be their Saviour. They trusted in your promises and their hearts were filled with gladness as they watched your loving-kindness manifested in the face of a tiny baby in a lowly manger.

Father, you offer that same joy to us now if we know you and recognize Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. You gave us a reason to celebrate when you gave us the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ. You came to dwell among us. You went to Calvary's cross for us. You overcame death and rose from the dead for us. You forgive our sins and give us eternal life when we believe in you.

Our joy doesn't come from our jobs, our family, our relationships, our finances, or

our success. Our joy doesn't come from what we have on earth or who we are with. Our joy is a gift. It is the gift that you gave us that first Christmas in Jesus Christ. Flood our hearts with joy this Advent season. In Jesus' precious name we pray.

Amen Christianity.com

Prayer: Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word and Holy Spirit, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Reading: Matthew 1: 18-25

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'

²²All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name JESUS. New International Version UK

A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.

Preaching notes: In a moving narrative in today's gospel reading, Matthew describes Joseph's love and care for Mary, which becomes something of a metaphor for the love of the God who is about to step physically into human affairs and experience.

Joseph is engaged to Mary, but before the marriage he discovers that his "young maiden of marriageable age" is pregnant. Joseph is deeply troubled and realizes because they have never had sex that he's not the father. Being a very gracious man, he desires to minimize Mary's shame so he decides to divorce her privately. Divorce was required to end an engagement/betrothal in those days.

God sends an angel to explain things to Joseph. The child she carries was conceived by supernatural means of the Holy Spirit. He should go ahead with the marriage. The angel tells Joseph to call his son the name Immanuel which is translated "God with us".

What Matthew, the Apostle, does here is an amazing bit of Divine Biblical Theology. He connects the Sign of Immanuel from Isaiah 7:14 to the virgin birth of Jesus. What Isaiah promised in the eighth century B.C., expecting it to be fulfilled in his time, Matthew saw as having its ultimate fulfilment in his day. Or to put it another way, what Isaiah foresaw

as a new era to come, Matthew saw as present. The birth of Jesus is the sign of God's presence, "God with us."

Writer Nick Fawcett helps us to understand the passage in the following meditation.

"It was the strangest of dreams, ludicrous really, yet I can't get it out of my mind. You see I dreamt God was speaking to me. No not face to face, I don't mean that, but through his angel, claiming to be his special messenger. And do you know what he told me?"

Take Mary to be your wife - that's what. Just when I had decided to put her quietly aside, hush up the scandal as best as I could this character was telling me to think again. And why? Because apparently it had nothing to do with her because the baby, she is carrying is not a result of some fleeting passion but conceived of the Holy Spirit ordained by God himself.

Well I have heard a few excuses in my time but that takes the biscuit! I mean who did this fellow think I was- some fool born yesterday. It's laughable, but funny a dream it may have been, but it's lived with me.

And you know what - I can't say why exactly- it was a mixture of things I suppose. There was Mary for a start. The way she looked at me as she broke the news almost as though she too had met with God and was confident that I would understand. But what really swung it for me was that I had this feeling deep inside me that God - somehow God had touched me".

The essence of Matthews story is that in the birth of Jesus the Spirit of God was operative as never before in the world.

The name Immanuel – God with us – is a profound and powerful statement of God’s desire to be in intimate communion with human beings. The challenge for us is to recognise God’s presence in all situations and circumstances. We can doubt God’s love in times of grief, pain and trauma, but we find Joy, comfort, healing and strength when we are able to experience God’s “with-us-ness” even in such times. And, when we are able to help others to recognise and experience God’s presence and love in their lives – whatever they may be going through – then we have truly become Advent people.

The Spirit brings Gods truth to the world, He takes up residence in us and enables us to have a joyful living relationship with Jesus. To empower us to witness to others the good news of that loving and restored relationship with Him. **Amen.** Paul Wayne.

Song: Great is the darkness StF405

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vo74LSKIJY&ab_channel=citrail

Great is the darkness
That covers the earth
Oppression, injustice and pain
Nations are slipping
In hopeless despair
Though many have come in Your name
Watching while sanity dies
Touched by the madness and lies

*Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus
Pour out Your Spirit we pray
Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus
Pour out Your Spirit on us today*

May now Your Church rise
With power and love

This glorious gospel proclaim
In every nation
Salvation will come
To those who believe in Your name
Help us bring light to this world
That we might speed Your return

Great celebrations
On that final day
When out of the heavens You come
Darkness will vanish
All sorrow will end
And rulers will bow at Your throne
Our great commission complete
Then face to face we shall meet Gerald Coates
(b 1944) and Noel Richards (b 1955)

The Lord’s Prayer:

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.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever. **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession:

Lord we pray for protection and comfort for Your followers who are suffering persecution today. In so many countries of the world, to be a Christian is a courageous choice that brings violence, discrimination and severe hardship. We pray strength and power for the organisations that support the persecuted church. We pray for our Government to speak out and work for justice for the worldwide persecuted church.

God of all compassion, we pray comfort for those who are facing their first Christmas without a particular loved one by their side. Father, guided by Your Holy Spirit, help us to be a comfort and encouragement to those who are feeling the pain of loss, either recent or long ago.

We pray for the lonely, the lost and those who feel they have been forgotten. Lord be a comfort at their side today, come to them and make Yourself known to everyone who longs for Your presence. *We bring our own concerns and add them to these prayers. Amen*

Closing Song: Joyful joyful Sing/read or proclaim the words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYKP2p6uEkM&ab_channel=TommyWalkerMinistries

Joyful, joyful, we adore You,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before You,
Op'ning to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!

All Your works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thy,
Centre of unbroken praise;
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in Thee!

Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living,
Ocean-depth of happy rest!
Loving Father, Christ our Brother,

Let Your light upon us shine;
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the mighty chorus,
Which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us,
Joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward
In the triumph song of life.
*You bring us joy, joy, joy
we adore thee*

Henry Van Dyke (1852-1933)

Blessing:

Be people of joy. Let joy live in your heart and share the joy of Christ with all you meet. Share joy by seeing the good in each other.

Share joy by remembering good times and hoping for good times to come.

Share joy by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share joy.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share joy, peace, hope and love with those you meet. **Amen.** LitugyLink.net

Notice:

As we approach Christmas we remember those families in our midst who are struggling. A very practical and Christian response is to give to the Christchurch Foodbank. Jean and John Davies will shortly be visiting the Foodbank, if you have anything you would like to donate but cannot drop it at the church please let one of the stewards, Jean or myself know and we will collect it from you. Thank you.

Phillip Dixon, December 2020. YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182