

**Service at Home 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020**  
**Christmas Eve**

The Lord be with you  
and also with you

A prayer which Collects our thoughts together today

Eternal God,  
who made this most holy night  
to shine with the brightness of your one true  
light:  
bring us, who have known the revelation of  
that light on earth,  
to see the radiance of your heavenly glory:  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.



**Our reading is from the Gospel of Luke: 1: 67-79**

Lord open our hearts to hear your word

### **Zechariah's Prophecy**

<sup>67</sup> Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

<sup>68</sup> "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.

<sup>69</sup> He has raised up a mighty saviour for us  
in the house of his servant David,

<sup>70</sup> as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

<sup>71</sup> that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

<sup>72</sup> Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,  
and has remembered his holy covenant,

<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,

to grant us <sup>74</sup> that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,

might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup> in holiness and  
righteousness

before him all our days.

<sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the  
Most High;

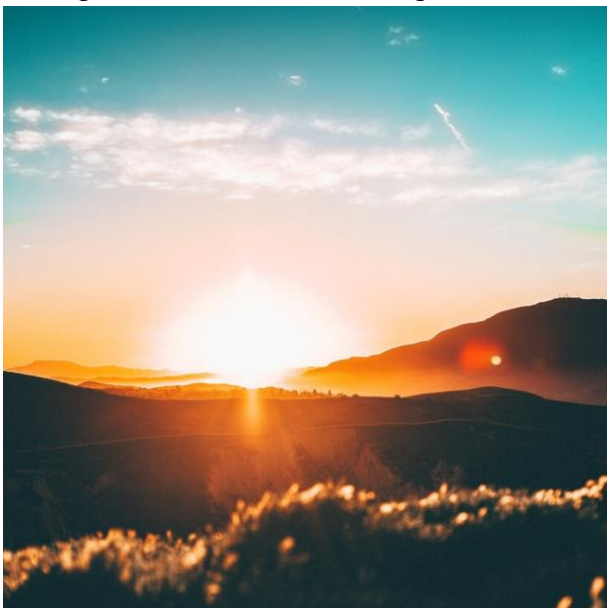
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his  
ways,

<sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to his people  
by the forgiveness of their sins.

<sup>78</sup> By the tender mercy of our God,  
the dawn from on high will break upon us,

<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in  
the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace."



Hear ends the reading  
Thanks be to God

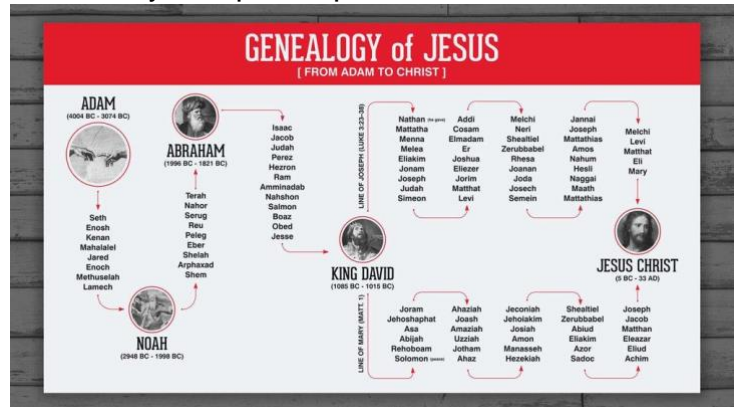
## Reflection by Marilyn

I don't know if you are into genealogy – tracing your ancestors. I'm not particularly, but my step-father was. I know one of the major problems is deciding which strand to follow because it quickly becomes unmanageable if you try to follow them all. He decided to follow the strand of my mother's family. However, unlike on the TV programme 'Who do you think you are?', there were no skeletons in the closet, no fascinating links to royalty or even famous people of the past. The most interesting things we discovered were who my mother inherited her sewing skills from and who was responsible for my brother and uncle's carpentry skills.

With Jesus there is no such dilemma. His genealogy is mapped out very clearly through the Hebrew Scripture (what we call the Old Testament) and in the first chapter of Matthew's gospel. He was from the house of David a revered father of the faith – a man raised from humble shepherd's boy to king. His pedigree was good. If he'd been on 'Who do you think you are?' it would have been a fascinating programme with some very colourful characters and serious incidents. Even David, his revered ancestor, had a very chequered past.

There can be no doubt about Jesus' pedigree because it is constantly remembered and spoken aloud whenever the name of God is praised. In our Gospel reading today we hear the Song of Zechariah – what many in Church know as the Benedictus because it begins Blessed be – in Latin Benedictus. Here is a priest in God's temple who hasn't been able to speak for a long time because he doubted the word of God. It was like God was saying to him – if you can't say anything sensible to uplift people in their faith, then don't bother speaking. And after all that time in silence, his first words are 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel'. No more doubting or uncertainty. A statement of faith.

Zechariah has realized that, not only is the Messiah coming to this world to save people from their sins, but his own son has a part to play in that miraculous wonder, that fulfilment of all the promises in scripture. His son John, who we call the Baptist, would be the one to get everyone ready to receive and worship this Messiah. He could have had no way of knowing what that would mean for his son – that he would live in the desert wearing animal hair and eating locusts. That he would be executed by the authorities. But Zechariah knew that it was an honour, that God would give him all the skills he needed to do this work and that his name would go down in history as the means of fulfilling one of the promises of God – to send a voice crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.



Zachariah maps out the promise, the purpose and the place of his son in that story. He praises God for His faithfulness to his people in the face of their disbelief. Not bad for someone who God felt he needed to silence.

We all have a place in destiny. We all have a purpose to fulfil. God has plans for each and every one of us. It may take us a while to realize what all that means for us but if we keep looking and thinking then it will become clear in the end. Perhaps we all need a space of silence to hear it for ourselves.

Prayers by Judith Berry

**Let us pray.**

**Almighty Father, please give us open hearts and ears** to learn from the teachings of Jesus. We thank You for the gift of the Christ Child as a beacon of hope for the world and the forgiveness of our many sins. Help us to learn the lessons which He taught and give us the strength of purpose to follow His example.

**Heavenly Father, we pray for the church throughout the world;** for every gathering where Your people anticipate with joy the fulfilment of Your promise to send a Saviour into our world. May we find our focus in the simplicity of the Christ Child and reflect His values in our lives.

**Lord hear us.** Lord graciously hear us.

**Gentle Father we pray for our own communities of friends and strangers.** We give You thanks for our own blessings and the comfort given to us by our families and friends. We pray that Your love will strengthen those suffering trial by illness, poverty or loneliness. We ask Your blessing on those whose lives may contrast so starkly with our own and who may be without the means or the will to celebrate and for whom this may be a particularly painful time.

**Lord hear us.** Lord graciously hear us.

**Eternal Father, we ask Your guidance for those who govern.** Give them the breadth of mind and heart to fulfil their many and varied duties wisely and to base their judgements only on seeking the common good.

**Lord hear us.** Lord graciously hear us.

**Loving Father, at this season of happy anticipation,** we give you thanks for the light of hope which the birth of Jesus brought into the darkness of our world. Help us to remember that though the ills of mankind may be many, they are as nothing compared to the strength of Your love. Please give hope to those who suffer in body, mind or spirit and comfort them with the assurance that the small flickering light in the stable at Bethlehem still has the power to light all darkness.

**Lord hear us.** Lord graciously hear us.

Merciful Father,  
accept these prayers for the sake of Jesus Christ,  
your son, our Lord.  
AMEN

Say the Lord's Prayer in whatever form you prefer

Our hymn today has been chosen by Michael Elsom

JOY TO THE WORLD

Joy to the World;  
the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King!  
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,  
And Heaven and nature sing.





Joy to the earth,  
the Saviour reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields & floods,  
rocks, hills & plains  
Repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins  
and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make  
his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world  
with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of  
His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love.

Words: Isaac Watts

Tune: attributed to G F Handel

A traditional recording of this hymn can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyciMYZq2-Y> ....alternatively you might enjoy  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcLvCiwIwtA> but be warned the words have been changed  
(possibly to accord with the religious views of the Fountainview Academy in Canada whose  
young people appear in this video)

Blessing:

May Almighty God, deliver us from evil  
by the grace which Christ brings,  
and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.  
May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children,  
and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts,  
forgiving and forgiven;  
and the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us and all those we love and pray for  
now and for evermore.  
Amen.

