

Service at Home 25th December 2020
CHRISTMAS DAY

The Lord be with you
and also with you

A prayer which Collects our thoughts
together today

Lord Jesus Christ,
your birth at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven
touching earth:
accept our heartfelt praise,
as we worship you,
our Saviour and our eternal God.
Amen.



Our reading is from Luke 2: 1-14

Lord open our hearts to hear your word

The Birth of Jesus

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.

The Shepherds and the Angels



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!"

Hear ends the reading
Thanks be to God

Reflection by Mike Binsley
Isaiah 9: 2-7; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14 (15-20)

Rejoice, Rejoice!
Emanuel has come to us

Today we once again rejoice in celebrating the birth of Christ, Emanuel, God with us; Born in humility to an ordinary family temporarily lodging among animals in their stable in the back streets of a small town; 'one of the least in the land of Judah.'



We rejoice in the familiar words from the prophet Isaiah 9. 6: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

And yet, today some may wonder what we have to rejoice about. Most of our country is in a lockdown situation. Plans for families to at last meet together have been disrupted at the last minute, and we face the prospect of the virus running away out of control. So what is there to rejoice about?

A meditation I was reading this last week said: The God we worship in Jesus Christ today is the God of our ancestors, whose lives we can hardly imagine, and the God of our children's children, whose lives are yet to be imagined.

By choosing a very humble birth, God in Christ identified with the powerless, the weak and the vulnerable. This life was not without hardship and danger from the outset. Although we have cosy pictures of nativity scenes, in a very short time his life was being threatened. Mary, Jesus and Joseph had to flee the country and live as refugees in Egypt.

So, in our situation today we can rejoice in the knowledge of 'God with us.' We may be going through troubled times; Many of us will be feeling lonely and missing our families being close to us, and wondering when will it all end. But, we remember that whatever happens, God is always with us.

President Barak Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace prize less than a year into his presidency. He recalls in his book; 'A Promised Land', looking out of the window of his Hotel room in Oslo, Norway, on the evening of the presentation. Several thousand people had gathered in the early dusk to recognise that year's recipient of the peace prize, each holding a single candle. As Obama looked at their hopeful faces, he thought of all of the troubles in the world that his administration had barely begun to deal with: Troops trying to keep peace in Iran and Afghanistan, the deprived mother in Ethiopia teaching her daughter to read and many other seemingly hopeless situations. The faces illuminated by the flickering light of a candle, seemed to be saying to him: 'Whatever you do to make the world a better place won't be enough; but try anyway.'



Yes, the God we worship in Jesus Christ today is the God of our ancestors, whose lives we can barely imagine and the God of our children's children, whose lives are yet to be imagined. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever. Jesus said: Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.

A constant theme throughout human history, and will always be, is for God's call to his children, each made in his image, to step out in faith, courage and obedience. My faith and your faith may be small, but try anyway: It is the God in Jesus in whom we trust – The Prince of Peace.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ child, be God's gift to us and to all people this Christmas Day and through all the years to come. Amen

Prayers prepared by Elizabeth Binsley

Lord Jesus Christ, may we come to worship you with the shepherds, proclaim you with the angels, seek you with the wise men, offer ourselves to you with Joseph and Mary, and rejoice in your love, Christ our Lord.

We pray for the time when all the world may know your love and saving power.

Lord Jesus, prince of peace,

Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father

We rejoice today as we celebrate the birth of Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer. There may be fewer people in our churches, but we give thanks and praise that due to modern technology many more will have been able to join in worship. We pray that in future when we are able to return to something more normal, we may not forget the ways in which the Church has reached out to those who wouldn't normally attend a place of worship. May these new ways of communicating enhance our ministry and our outreach in the future.

Lord Jesus, prince of peace,

Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord,

You entered a world full of turmoil, facing hardship and difficulties even in your early years. We pray for our world at the moment, struggling with an unprecedented pandemic. We pray for all world leaders, governments, scientists and health practitioners who have to make difficult and unpopular decisions. Lord, it is easy for us to criticise, but most people would not want to be the persons taking these decisions. And so, we pray for those in authority, give them wisdom and courage to take the right steps in order to contain and defeat this virus.

At this time too, we must not forget those in our world facing extra burdens, those living in areas of extreme poverty, those whose lives are shattered due to war and fighting, those who have fled their own countries because of danger, those who are homeless. May we never forget, in the midst of this pandemic, that millions of people are living in these extreme circumstances. Help us to be generous in supporting those who are still working to bring about change in our society.

Lord Jesus, prince of peace,

Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We pray for all who are missing close contact with their families, who will not be able to get together with loved ones over this Christmas season. We remember especially those who are alone, or lonely. However, we do rejoice that celebrating the birth of your Son has a way of uniting us and in many communities people are being drawn together in ways they have not experienced before, united by a common feeling of loss at not being able to see our families, but also a desire to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. May we rejoice with the wider family of our communities at this time.

Lord Jesus, prince of peace,

Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,

We bring to you those who are ill at this time. We remember any who are suffering at home or in hospital with Covid 19. We also pray for any whose other conditions are made worse by lockdown or by hospitals being unable to carry out their planned interventions. We bring to you all NHS staff as they struggle to cope with increasing admissions and with illness amongst the own clinicians. We pray for all caring for loved ones at home and who may not be getting the support they need. We remember all working in the community with the additional challenges that this entails. We pray for all suffering mental health issues and unable to access help that is vitally needed.

Lord, we know that you care for each and every one of us – may those in need be especially aware of your love and comfort day by day.

Lord Jesus, prince of peace,
Hear our prayer.

Loving Lord,

We rejoice that you became human that we might share in the Divine; you came down to lift us into your kingdom.

We remember those whose loved ones have died during this year, those who were unable to be with them at the end of their lives, families whose funeral services were very limited and unable to support one another.

We pray for any suffering grief and loss that you will bring them comfort and hope for the future.

We pray for all loved ones departed that we may share with them in a vision of your glory.

Lord Jesus, prince of peace,
Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Say the Lord's Prayer in whatever form you prefer

Our hymn today has been chosen by Ann Cregan

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and
triumphant!

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold him

Born the King of Angels:

O come, let us adore Him, (3x)

Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in
exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!

Glory to God, glory in the highest:

O come, let us adore Him, (3x)

Christ the Lord.

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this
happy morning;

Jesus, to thee be glory given!

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!

O come, let us adore Him, (3x)

Christ the Lord.



Blessing:

May the Lord, set our hearts on Jesus
for He is trustworthy, faithful
and the Giver of the gift of peace.

May He fill us this Christmas season
with his love and grace.

As others see God's peace in us,
let them recognize Him as Saviour.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you and all those you love and pray
for this Christmas and for evermore.

Amen.

