

Traditional Home service Sunday 19th Dec

OPENING PRAYER

God our redeemer,
who prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary
to be the mother of your Son:
grant that, as she looked for his coming
as our saviour, so we may be ready to
greet him when he comes again as our
judge; who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Christ the light of the world has come to
dispel the darkness of our hearts.
In his light let us examine ourselves and
confess our sins

God of mercy, we acknowledge that we
are all sinners. We turn from the wrong
that we have thought and said and done,
and are mindful of all that we have failed
to do. For the sake of Jesus, who died
for us, forgive us for all that is past,
and help us to live each day
in the light of Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the
name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to
God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms,
hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Praise to the Lord*)

READINGS - Micah 5.2-5a
Hebrews 10.5-10
Luke 1.39-45

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. I believe in
Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who
was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of
the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius
Pilate, was crucified, died, and was
buried; he descended to the dead. On
the third day he rose again; he ascended
into heaven, he is seated at the right
hand of the Father, and he will come to
judge the living and the dead. I believe in
the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness
of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Spend some time praying for our nation,
our community and our families.*

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.

HYMN 2 (*Joy to the world*)

CONCLUSION

May God the Son give you grace to live
in the light of his coming as redeemer
and judge. And the blessing of God
almighty, the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit, be among you and remain
with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
Praise Him in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him;
Let the Amen sound from His people again,
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills,
and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 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,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Sermon - Adrian Morton

Luke 1:39-45

Blessed are those who believe...

At last week's carol service at Easton Maudit I was again reflecting on the Christmas readings we have.

So often I think we, not quite romanticise the Christmas story.

But we tend to concentrate on the nice bits...

Ah.. little baby in a manger, surrounded by smiling animals.

A very clean Mary & Joseph looking on.

Angels joyfully singing their hearts out.
Jolly, good looking shepherds racing down the hill.

Well dressed awe inspiring wise men bringing gifts...

Yet, if you really read the Christmas event. Including the prophecies that came before the event of the birth of Jesus.

You'll know the story is quite gritty.
Its all really quite serious!

My reading at last week's Carol Service was Isaiah 9.. which includes:

"For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

Then it goes on... *"For to us a child is born..."*

The events that surrounded the wise men finding the new born Jesus include Herod wanting to kill Jesus.

Instead he ordered the killing of all boys under 2.

So the Christmas story is gritty and serious.

And yes, it is full of promise, and peace, and joy, and hope...

Of course it is...

Yet, if we don't comprehend the full story. With all its grittiness and serious nature.

I think we miss out on the full effects, the full benefits of the promise, the peace, the joy and the hope that is within the story.

I was looking at some of the Christmas adverts this year...

M&S has Percy the Pig coming to life...

John Lewis has a young boy called Nathan befriending a space traveller.

Lidl's Christmas advert had the title, "Big on a Christmas you can always believe in."

It is a bizarre advert.. christmas jumpers, christmas tree, christmas meal around the table, turkey, bubbly, pigs in blankets...

The scene is then repeated in increasingly futuristic ways...

Ending with "how's living forever?"...

"Big on a Christmas you can always believe in."

What Christmas do we really believe in?

The one presented to us in the bible is how God himself has come to earth.

Born as a baby to a teenage virgin called Mary.

We do hear about some wise men, who came, recognised who Jesus was, bowed down, worshipped him and gave him gifts.

We learn that Jesus came as Light into a world characterised by darkness.

In the last few months we have again been reminded just how much darkness there is in this world.

And I don't simply mean the pandemic which is rearing its ugly head again.

We've seen migrants dying in the channel. Migrants stuck in Belarus and having to live in a forest.

We've seen little children murdered by those who should be caring for them.

Just awful stories.

Yet into this dark world Jesus has come as the Light of the world.

To bring Hope, peace and Joy...

That He came, as the Hebrews reading states, to do the will of God the Father.

Ultimately He came on a rescue mission...

To ultimately die on a cross so that those who believe in Him have forgiveness of sins.

And can live as sons and daughters of the living God.

Again as the Hebrews reading says, live as a people made holy, set apart, by the sacrifice of Jesus.

So in this world that is so full of darkness, Jesus the light of the world has come.

And it doesn't mean that all the darkness is dispelled automatically and instantaneously.

We know all too well that is true.

But as we learn to walk with Him.

As we learn to walk in the light, we are co labourers with Him, and by the power of the Spirit we can see darkness dispelled.

And that is on a big scale..

So the likes of Hope for Justice are seeing thousands come out of modern day slavery.

The likes of Hope into Action are working with churches to house many homeless people including migrant families.

And we also see light coming into people's individual lives as they are freed from addictions, or despair, or turmoil...

Do we believe in this Christmas story?

Its my conviction that's whilst as a society, a culture, we hanker after the promises of peace, and joy, and hope that the Christmas story offers...

Christmas becomes instead full of fuzzy feelings.

Sentimentality...

For some what they can get out of it...

For others a financial strain they can't really burden...

I saw a newspaper article about ebay recently... Ebay are expecting over 100,00 unwanted gifts to be listed on their websites on Christmas afternoon.

Last year listings for computers and tablets rose by 25% on Christmas Day.

A survey found that each Briton receives on average two presents that they do not want, worth £48.41p.

I just think many people skirt around the edges, maybe glimpsing the promises of peace, joy, hope, but never fully understanding or experiencing them.

And its because society isn't believing the real Christmas story.

A story that is serious and full of grittiness. But if grasped fully, it leads to much peace, joy and Hope.

In our reading, Elizabeth said to Mary, "Blessed is she who has believed..."

Blessed are we who believe the real Christmas story.

See, for a Hebrew understanding, believing isn't just agreeing certain facts are true.

In our culture, when we say we believe something.

So we believe the Moon is 239,000 miles from the earth.

We may believe that is true but it has no bearing upon our life.

A Hebrew understanding of 'believing' is about living a life of full reliance upon Him.

In other words, I'll only believe something if it transforms my life.

If it affects fully my life...

Believing in the Christmas story that way will mean we really are blessed!

And we'll be able to sing as Mary sang:

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." Amen.