

Traditional Home service

Sunday 18th December

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

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

*Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God.
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 (*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*)

READINGS - Isaiah 7.10-16
Romans 1.1-7
Matthew 1.18-25

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 (*O Little Town of Bethlehem*)

CONCLUSION

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with you all; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go.

Refrain

3 O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.

Refrain

4 O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

Refrain

5 O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode.

Refrain

6 O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light.

Refrain

7 O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace.

Refrain

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King
and peace to all the earth.

3 How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray,
cast out our sin and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!

Sermon - Adrian Morton

Matthew 1:18-25

Jesus - Saviour and Immanuel

Christmas is a lovely time of year.

Communities come together at Christmas fairs, markets.

There are work party's, family get togethers.

Its a great time of year for many people.
Its also a hard time of year for many people.

Those who have experienced loss through the year will face their first Christmas without a loved one.

Which can be really hard...

The Christmas message is one of good news
- Peace, joy, goodwill, hope to all people.

At the heart of the Christmas story, there is a message that is life transforming.

Amongst all the fun, laughter, party-ing, razz-ma-tazz, there is a serious message than can transform our lives.

In this Matthew reading we hear two names for Jesus:

Firstly, it says "an angel of Lord appeared to him (Joseph) 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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins"

The name Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means The Lord Saves.

Jesus was born into our world to be a Saviour.

Now we understand the need for a Saviour in other areas of our life.

If our boat is sinking, we need saving.
If we are lost in a jungle we need saving.
Even maybe if our sat nav goes on the blink we may feel we need saving.
We may see the need for saving if we are hooked on alcohol or hard drugs.

But what does it mean in this context.
For the nation of Israel their first thought was they needed to be saved from their roman occupiers.

But Jesus showed that salvation had a wider meaning than that.

Firstly, Jesus came not just for the Jews but for the world.

And he came not just for one portion of history, but for all history.
Including Bozeat in 2022.

So what does it mean in this context.
Well, you have to go right back to the beginning of the Bible to find out.

If you come to the Bozeat carol service tonight, the first reading will be from Genesis.

And the reading will describe Adam and Eve being thrown out of the garden after a bit of cunning by a snake.

The main point being that Adam and Eve, who represent mankind, lost their relationship with their maker.

They lost their spiritual connection with Almighty God.

And since that point people have inherited that.
People are born physically, but they are not born with a spiritual connection to God.
We grow up having no real sense of the divine.
No inner sense that God is our Father.
And actually that such be every person's natural experience.
We are designed to be spiritual people.

And so we are 'lost' in this state of no spiritual connection with God and we need 'saving' from it.
Ultimately we need saving from dying in that state.
We all die physically, but we don't have to die spiritually.

<People will say to me, I pray to God but it seems like my prayers just hit an invisible ceiling...
Its like I just can't get through....

Well there is a good reason for that...

Unless Jesus has become their Saviour, then they are still disconnected from God.

And it is not that God has moved away from us.
We have moved away from Him by what the Bible calls Sin.

Sin has disconnected us from God.
And that is why Jesus came into the world.
To deal with your sin and my sin.
Jesus was born into this world to rescue us from sin's consequences.
To restore the connection back to God.
To save us from spiritual death.

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist.
If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Saviour

The second name used in this passage is in verse 25:

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will be call him Immanuel - which means God with us.

I don't know what sort of year you have had.

I'm sure most of us can look back over the year and think of many things that have gone well.

Events, occasions we can celebrate.
Plans that came to fruition and worked out as we hoped.

I'm sure most of us can also look back and point to things that didn't work out so well.

Having to battle through uncertainty, or poor health...
Maybe even things that have caused us great sadness, tremendous pain.

As I mentioned at the beginning, for those who have lost loved ones, this Christmas will

be the first without them... and that can be painful.

Many in our communities have been unsettled by the war in Ukraine.

For many there is continued financial uncertainty because of the cost of living crisis.

The promise of the Christmas story is that "God is with us."
That he has entered this world of ours to be with us.

He has ceased to be distant from us.
God has become knowable.

The Christmas story for me wouldn't be that impressive if it only affected what happened 2000 years ago.

It would be impressive!
But maybe it wouldn't warrant the fuss we keep making of it still today.

The promise still stands.
God is with us today.
Jesus has made that possible
We can experience the reality of his presence today.
He is that close to us.

There is something comforting, something safe about having someone with you.

Someone offering you Hope in the darkness.
Peace in the turmoil.

It seems to me to be a sad thing that many people choose to have God distant in their lives.
If he is there at all.

The very thing that was lost to humankind.
That which Jesus came to restore.

Was the presence of God in our lives.

In the Genesis reading that we'll hear at the carol service tonight, it says:
That Adam and Eve hid themselves from the Lord.

They had rebelled against Him.

They had done something they knew was wrong.

And because of their shame they hid themselves.

And then it says the Lord called to the man, "Where are you?"

The Christmas story means we no longer need to hide from God. Jesus has come to deal with our sin.

We can't understand the Christmas story without looking at the cross.

That is why he was born - in order to die for us.

Sadly many people miss the significance of Jesus at Christmas time.

The party's, the razz-ma-tazz, the food, presents.. all the glitter and promise that the retail sector promotes..

All can be a distraction and can cause us to miss the truth.

In the Christmas account, King Herod missed the truth about Jesus. Because his pride meant he wouldn't humble himself and bow down to the King of Kings.

The Inn Keeper missed the truth about Jesus. He was so pre-occupied with his business.

Many people are caught up in the rat race of life.

As J John says: The problem with that is even if you win the race you are still a rat!

The Christmas story is the most wonderful story. It has the power to transform lives.

Jesus, Immanuel, God with us has been born into the world as our Saviour.

And with Him, Peace, joy, goodwill, hope is offered to all people.

Amen.