

THE SERVICE OF THE LORD'S DAY
Sunday 15th December 2019

Worth Pondering

Carry out a random act of kindness with no expectation of reward
safe in the knowledge that one day
someone might do the same for you. *(Princess Diana)*

Speak, Lord, in the stillness, while we wait on thee
Hushed our hearts to listen in expectancy.

Speak, O Blessed Master, in this quiet hour;
Let us see thy face Lord, feel thy touch of power

The Advent Wreath

Today is the third Sunday in Advent -

the time when we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child.

We light a candle each week to remind us

that Christ brings light into the dark places of the world. God promises a messenger to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

We wait in faith for this promise to be fulfilled..

We light the candle of hope

to proclaim that God's light is coming into the world. *A purple candle is lit*

We light the candle of peace

to proclaim that God's promises will be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ
- Prince of Peace. *A purple candle is lit*

Third Sunday in Advent: Joy

This Sunday's Advent wreath candle lighting varies because it is *Gaudette* (= "rejoice!") Sunday. As a break from the heaviness of Advent's penitential preparations, this Sunday offers a reprise from our dark longings to offer joy's glimmer of light. The Latin word, *Gaudette*, is grammatically imperative, reminding us that even in the midst of darkness, we are called to rejoice. This is also why we light a pink candle — the colour of joy in the penitential season of blue/purple. Only the Christ candle is white, also a colour signifying joy in many cultures, because the fullness of joy is in the Lord.

SUNG RESPONSE: TIS 286: "Light one candle for hope" (*seated*)

1. **Light one candle for hope
one bright candle for hope
He brings hope to every heart
He comes! He comes!**
2. **Light one candle for peace
one bright candle for peace
He brings peace to every heart
He comes! He comes!**
3. **Light one candle for joy
one bright candle for joy
Every nation will find salvation
In Bethlehem's baby boy.**

WELCOME to all of you.

Your presence here enriches us and this time of celebration together.

The time has come to enter and celebrate.

Here we proclaim the fellowship of life.

Here we rejoice in the beauty of the season.

**Come one, come all, come together
to join in the spirit and mystery of Advent.**

Act of Awareness:

As the sun rises each day in perfect newness,
so may we break upon each new day with splendour and expectation:
renewed creatures, content with reflected radiance and dirty fingernails.

HYMN: TIS 272

**Come, thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free,
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.**

**Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.**

**Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a king,
born to reign in us for ever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.**

**By thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to thy glorious throne.**

Charles Wesley 1707-88

Sharing 'The peace'

This is a house of God. A place of peace.
A place where we befriend one another.

Let us greet one another as a sign of God's peace
and of our shared friendship.

The peace of the LORD be with you

And also with you._

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

Let us hear what God the LORD will speak.

**God will speak peace to the people, the faithful,
to those who turn to God in their hearts.**

Isaiah 35:1-10

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. ⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalm 146:5-10

⁵ Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; ⁷ who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰ The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

Luke 1:46b-55

^{46b} "My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

James 5:7-10

⁷ Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

⁹ Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Matthew 11:2-11

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

⁴ Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?"

⁸ What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

In the testimony of God's people

We hear the Word of the Lord

HYMN: TIS 265

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

Rejoice! rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

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

Rejoice! rejoice! ...

**O come, O key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.**

Rejoice! rejoice! ...

**O come, O branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save
and give them victory o'er the grave.**

Rejoice! rejoice! ...

**O come, O dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

Rejoice! rejoice! ...

*Anon., Latin, 18th cent. or earlier
based on Antiphons from 9th cent. or earlier
tr. John Mason Neale 1818-66 alt.*

A Reflection –

A Celebration of Faith

May our time together renew our hope.

**May the stories we share refresh our courage,
and the songs we sing, lift our spirits.**

**May the touch of hands, the sound of laughter,
and the sight of faces new and familiar,
restore us in faith.**

NOTICES:

OFFERING & DEDICATION:

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: - The Lord's Prayer

HYMN: TIS 281

- 1. When God almighty came to be one of us,
masking the glory of his golden train,
dozens of plain things shared the experience,
and they will never be the same again.
Sing all you midwives, dance all the carpenters,
sing all the publicans and shepherds too,
God in his mercy uses the commonplace,
God on his birthday had a need of you.**

2. **Splendour of Rome and Local Authority,
working on policy with furrowed head,
joined to locate the Messiah's nativity
just where the prophets had already said.
Sing all you tax-men, dance the Commissioners,
sing public servants and policemen too,
God to his purpose uses the governments,
God at his coming had a need of you.**
3. **Wise men, they called them, earnest astrologers,
watching for meaning in the moving stars,
science or fancy, learned or laughable,
theirs was a vision that was brought to pass.
Sing all you wise men, dance all the scientists,
whether your theories are false or true,
God uses knowledge, God uses ignorance,
God at his coming had a need of you.**
4. **Sing all creation, made for his purposes,
called by his providence to live and move;
none is unwanted, none insignificant,
Love needs a universe of folk to love;
young men and maidens, old men and children,
black ones and coloured ones and white ones too,
God at his coming, and to eternity,
God took upon himself the needs of you.**

Michael Edward Hewlett 1916-

Reflection: *"Awe" #163 By Dennis McCarty. Thoughts from a Gentle Atheist/99*

The blazing stars,
The eyes of lovers,
The smiles of children,
Melodies that fill the soul.
Creatures too small even to see,
Particles knowable only through calculation.
Miracles range before us, singing the mystery
That lies at the core of the plainest things.
May our eyes be wide and our vision clear,
To absorb the simplicity of the wonderful.

Parting Words:

Carry with you what is precious to us all:
reverence for all life,
beauty that displays itself in love,
deep, abiding peace.

(Gordon B McKeeman)

Words of Blessing:

Go in peace.
Live simply, at home in yourself.
Be just in your word, just in deed.
Remember the depth of your own compassion.
Crave peace for all peoples in this world, beginning with yourselves.
And as you go, go with the dream of that peace

Amen! May it be so!

TIS 779:

**May the feet of God walk with you,
and God's` hand hold you tight,
May the eye of God rest on you,
and God's ear hear your cry.
May the smile of God be for you,
and God's breath give you life.
May the Child of God grow in you,
and God's love bring you home.**

Aubrey Podlich 1946–

TIS 778:

**Shalom to you now,
shalom my friends.
May God's full mercies
bless you my friends.
In all your living
and through your loving;
Christ be your shalom.
Christ be your shalom.**

Elise Shoemaker Eslinger 1942–