

Sheffield United Reformed Churches
Team Ministry worship for individuals or families

Morning worship on the 6th December 2020 at 10:30 am
Second Sunday in Advent
Communion

Lighting the Candle

We light the second candle of Advent. Each candle kindles a hope within us and each grows less by burning, recalling the cost you bore. Lord of Candle and Cross, we light our candle in thanksgiving, we gather virtually in worship and we wait in wonder...

Call to worship

We have heard your call, coming from strange places. We have received your gift, calling us into unexpected connections. We have been nurtured by your invitation, making friendships along the way. We approach you now with humble hearts and expectation, knowing you welcome all – stranger and friend.

Hymn

Lord I lift Your name on high - Lord I love to sing Your praises
I'm so glad You're in my life; I'm so glad You came to save us
You came from heaven to earth to show the way
from the earth to the cross my debt to pay
from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky
Lord I lift Your name on high

Prayer of Worship, Thanksgivings and Confession

We give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever...

Lord, as we pause to give thanks to you, we bring to mind all the people whom we regard as good. So we are thankful for those you have sent into our lives. Those who are supportive and helpful, kind and generous, forgiving and understanding. Those who bring joy through laughter and those who comfort us when we weep in perplexed pain.

We thank you for those who lift our hearts simply by being with us: whose very presence is enough to help us face the dark, embrace the day and lift the load.

Jesus, our time of isolation, has made us realise what a gift these people are and what riches they bring into our lives. Perhaps this is a time to make us aware of how we so often take others for granted - and for that we are truly sorry.

But as we think of these who are dear to us, in this time of turning to you, we realise that you Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are all these things to us - and more.

Your love endures forever: Ever-lasting, always growing, storm-surviving, firm, constant, continual, permanent and ever-present.

Because you Lord Jesus, are always with us and are always coming to us: embracing our lives with your life, healing our past through your cross, enlivening our present through your resurrection, strengthening our future through the promise of your coming.

And so we worship you, risen, living and coming Lord.

Readings



Isaiah 40: 1-8 – “Comfort my people”

Psalms 85:1-2 (8-13) – steadfast love and faithfulness will meet.

Mark 1:1-8 - Prepare, in the desert, a way for the Lord...

2 Peter 3. 8-15 - The Day of the Lord will come...

Reflection - by Rev Peter Heckels

Can I begin by saying that I am sorry still to be here, not because I hoped COVID-19 would have passed and we would all be back to the way we were, but I am sorry to be here because I hoped that Jesus would have returned by now. Some of you will have heard me say that before and wonder why I persist in this way of thinking, but this is what the Bible tells us to expect so why not?

The people of Israel had long waited for the Messiah to come, especially in times of difficulty or trouble. Israel was going through a time of great spiritual and moral darkness, the future was bleak, depression was rife and restlessness and despair gripped many. Israel's spiritual leaders were silent, and out of the desert came John baptizing and preaching, 'Turn away from your sins and be baptized', sent by God to get people ready for the coming messiah.

Yet not many really believed the message, they had waited too long, heard the promise before. It's a bit like that today not many believe that Jesus may come again tomorrow, let alone today, in fact we avoid the challenge. We have waited too long. The early church believed Jesus return would be soon, but time passes, and we can only endure so many disappointments. Yet who are we to question God's timing?

Over the last few weeks our Gospel readings have directed us to this if we have listened. The parable of the Talents where the master returns to his servants (Matt 25:19): The sheep and the goats remind us of a time of judgement 'When the Son of Man comes as King' (Matt 25:31): Then last week 'The Son of Man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory' (Mark 13:26). And so, we are brought to John the Baptist and the promise of the long awaited coming of the Messiah.

When Jesus returns what will he find? A world where people are not respected: so Black lives matter, as do South Asian lives, Indian subcontinent lives, white European lives, South American lives, Mexican lives. Indeed all lives matter: so I will take the knee.

A world ravaged by disease: - COVID-19, cancer, heart disease, leprosy, measles, malaria: so I will take the knee.

A world where people are displaced and constantly on the move because of war or economics: - in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, South Sudan, Palestine: so I will take the knee.

A world where the distribution of wealth shows such inequality: - where footballers and television personalities are paid millions while children need free school meals, where the rich in India live in palaces while so many factory workers live in slums, where so many suffer from obesity while so many cannot afford food and turn to food banks, where rulers in Africa enjoy their nations wealth while so many lack a basic water supply: so I will take the knee.

And when I take the knee I will pray 'Thy Kingdom come', and I will believe that a new heaven and a new earth will come to be. When will this be? It is not for us to know. Yet in God's time it will be for this is what he has declared. For those who do not know Jesus and the love of the cross I will take the knee.

I will pray that God will bring the prodigals home, and I will pray that God will open the eyes of the spiritually blind, and the ears of the spiritually deaf, to see and hear all that Jesus does for them. I will pray that the church proclaims the Gospel of love, bringing people to Jesus. I will pray that Jesus will be welcomed by the whole earth when he returns. And I will take the knee and ask for patience and trust as I wait God's timing.

Hymn for Reflection R & S 656

Lo! he comes with clouds descending, once for favored sinners slain;
thousand, thousand saints attending swell the triumph of his train.
Alleluia! Alleluia! God appears on earth to reign.

Ev'ry eye shall now behold him, robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at naught and sold him, pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing, shall the true Messiah see.

Yes, amen! Let all adore thee, high on thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the pow'r and glory, claim the kingdom for thine own.
O come quickly, O come quickly; alleluia! Come, Lord, come.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving Lord, we hold before you, in the hope of the coming of your Kingdom, a world that is fragile:

- a world that professes that life matters, yet many remain marginalised, discriminated against and forgotten - so we kneel in supplication

- a world ravaged by disease: not just Covid-19 but malnutrition, cancer, heart disease, leprosy, measles, malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS and so many anxieties and disorders of the mind - so we kneel in supplication

- a world where people are oppressed and displaced and constantly on the move because of war or economics - in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, China, South Sudan, Palestine, north Africa and along and within the borders of Europe and the southern United States - so we kneel in supplication

- a world where political corruption is deeply rooted and the distribution of your gifts highlights such inequality: where the rich don't notice when they spend enough to feed a village; where millions of children need free school meals, where the rich live in palaces built on the labour of those who live in slums and dangerous buildings; where food banks are the norm and cookery programmes saturate the tv channels - so we kneel in supplication

- our world where so many known to us are suffering: drawing to the end of life, knowing bereavement or the burden of caring for the long-term sick, those who are ill, those who have suffered accident and those awaiting hospital treatment, those who are anxious and those who are in trouble, those who face redundancy, uncertainty or unemployment - so we kneel in supplication

But we hold before you, in hope of the coming of your Kingdom, a world that is loved:

- a world in which people of diverse races, classes and creeds can find hope together and live in mutual appreciation and understanding, where barriers are being broken down and knowledge is being shared - so we kneel in expectation

- a world that is capable of discovering and dispensing vaccines and new methods of health care and effective therapies and treatment - so we kneel in expectation

- a world that has enough natural and economic resource to share with those who are seeking better lives and enough love and space to welcome the stranger, a world in which many are working for peace - so we kneel in expectation

- a world where many people of good-will are campaigning for justice, addressing needs in their communities, doing acts of kindness to their neighbour, investing time and capital in education and business - so we kneel in expectation

- our world in which we hold one another before you in love and we see so many of our prayers answered in your perfect, compassionate wisdom - so we kneel in expectation

In supplication and in expectation of Your Kingdom we bring our prayers and say... **Our Father**

Sharing Communion

We share in Holy Communion, drawing near to our Lord as He commands as we share bread and wine. I invite all of you:

All you who seek security in pieces of land and possessions to come and sit at the table with those who have nothing to lose. I invite you:

All you who seek to be comfortable in the close circle of partner, family, and friends, to come and sit at the table with the different and the strange. I invite you:

All you who seek power and status driven by ambition without counting the cost, to come and sit at the table with the humble and gentle. I invite you:

All you who seek conformity and mindlessly live according to expectation, to come and sit at the table with the free and the dancing. I invite you:

All you who seek stability accepting a peace that is no peace, to come and sit at the table with the dreamers and the visionaries. Christ, we want to accept your invitation, empower us through your spirit to risk, to share, to venture, to dare, to dream, to dance, to celebrate. At your great banquet of joy make me a worthy guest.

And so, as He invites us, let us eat bread...His body broken for us (*we eat bread*)

As He invites us, let us drink wine...His blood shed for us (*we drink wine*)

Now let us give thanks for these gifts as we sing of His grace...

Song *Your grace is sufficient* (Martin Nystrom)

Your grace is sufficient for me
Your strength is made perfect when I am weak
All that I cling to I lay at your feet
Your grace is sufficient for me

I'm no longer striving to merit your love - I rest in your promise to me
That all of my sins have been washed in your blood
Your mercy is all that I need

You see me as righteous because of the blood that made the atonement for me
Your mercy has triumphed where I should be judged
So now by your grace I am free
Your grace is sufficient for me

Blessings

May the humility of the shepherds;
The perseverance of the wise men;
The joy of the angels
The caring of Joseph;
The obedience of Mary;
And the peace of the Christ-child
Be yours this Advent season