

**Sheffield United Reformed Churches
Team Ministry worship for individuals or families
(including communion)**

**Sunday 3rd January 2020 at 10:30 am
2nd Sunday of Christmas**

Call to worship

Creator God, because of you there was a beginning. Because of you there is a continuing. Fill our expectant hearts as we stand on this threshold of a new year. We have been here so many times; and yet we have never been here before. Come, O come ... as we worship.

Carol

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, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Yes, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning,
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.
O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Prayer of Worship

Welcome, you are a thousand times welcome because of a baby in a Bethlehem manger, you are welcome to worship the living God. Lord Jesus we pray that as we worship, we may come with the wonder of the shepherds as we too respond to your call to seek the Saviour – Christ the Lord. We pray that we may come with the adoration of the Magi as we come to offer our gifts to the King of kings.

Lord Jesus thank you for welcoming us to worship the babe of Bethlehem who now sits on His heavenly throne. To you be glory honour and praise in all we do this day and forever more. Amen

Readings



Psalm 147 – how good is it to sing praises to our God

John 1:1-18 – the light shines in the darkness and it is the true light which gives light to everyone

Ephesians 1: 3-14 – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ

Reflection

Prayer before reflection - *May my inadequate words, by God's grace and by the power of the Holy Spirit, make way for Christ the Living Word to find a room in our hearts.*

At the close of the year we look back and remember famous people who have, to use a quaint phrase, "left us". One notable departure was of Argentinian footballer Maradona. Or as I like to call him "Marmitedona" (because you either loved or hated him). He was divisive, brilliant yet flawed: a footballing genius but also a cheat (with a hint of blasphemy... will English fans ever forgive his "Hand of God" comment?)

Like him or loathe him, he WAS an inspirational figure. The 1986 Argentinian team were an unremarkable bunch. Few of them would have been picked for the other teams of the day. Yet, with Maradona leading them, they became world beaters.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus presents us with a straightforward challenge: "Turn and believe the Good News" This is a simple choice of two realities: God is nowhere or now here. God, born in a lowly stable and laid in a manger, is now with us - or he isn't. God is caring for his world and steering it towards a hopeful future - or he isn't. Later on the choice of believing would also be straightforward: Jesus has conquered death - or he hasn't.

The consequences of believing the positive answers are profound. Yes, doubts will always remain and difficult days will always come, but, ultimately, by faith and hope, we can live hopeful lives that are touched by a transforming compassion for others. The Church through the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, and through the presence of the God who is captaining our team, become "world beaters" - against all the odds.

And so, in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul, no doubt holding in his mind the wonderful promises of the Psalms and the prophet Jeremiah, sets out the amazing things that God has done for us in Christ. The whole epistle is a remarkable exposition of God's decisive action in history through Christ and the implications for us as individuals, for families, for whole communities and, indeed the whole human race!

The first few verses of the first chapter of the Epistle (in our lectionary reading) set the tone. Paul speaks of three things:

A life of blessing (verse 1) - in Christ, he has blessed us with every spiritual resource of the life of Heaven. There is no task we cannot accomplish, no challenge we cannot face, no difficulty we cannot endure through the generous help and support of the Holy Spirit of our Father, given through Christ

A way of being (v4) - in Christ, He chose us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love - we are called to lives of blameless love which means striving for full-hearted excellence in our service to one another and to the wider world, in lives that speak in word and action of the love, grace, compassion and kindness of God in Christ

A place of belonging (v5) - in Christ, he was pleased to mark us out for adoption as his children. This was God's great pleasure, not to keep us at a distance or in a state of fear, wallowing in a sense of guilt and failure. But to know that we are accepted in his love, a precious and valued part of his family. How blessed we are to be called the children of God!

This is God's amazing intention towards us. Can we grasp it? No wonder Paul follows with a thankful prayer for God's Spirit to enable us to know three things, not just in our heads but in the depths of our hearts (*Ephesians 1, 16-20*):

- the HOPE to which we have been called
- the RICHES of kindness and compassion that we have through our life with God
- the POWER that is at work within us - the power that raised Christ from the dead

As we turn into 2021 and challenges continue, and hope beckons, may we make that our prayer for ourselves and each other. Wishing you a blessed new year with love in Christ

Carol

Christians, awake, salute the happy morn whereon the Saviour of the world was born
Rise to adore the mystery of love which hosts of angels chanted from above
With them the joyful tidings first begun of God incarnate and the Virgin's Son!

Like Mary, let us, ponder in our mind, God's wondrous love in saving human kind
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss from His poor manger to His bitter cross
Follow we him who has our cause maintained and earth's first heavenly sate shall be regained!

Prayers of Confession and Intercession.

In a dark and disfigured world, we have not held out the light of Christ
Lord, have mercy

In a hungry and despairing world, we have failed to share the bread of life
Christ, have mercy

In a cold and loveless world, we have kept the love of God to ourselves
Lord, have mercy

May almighty God, who sent his Son Jesus into the world to save sinners, bring us His pardon and peace, now and forever

We pray that Christ Jesus may be seen in the life of His church.
You have called us into the family of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters be strengthened by your Grace, as we pray for those persecuted for their faith unable to openly worship for fear of prison or death?
Jesus Lord of your Church
In your mercy hear us

You have called us to be a temple of praise where the Holy Spirit may dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts so that our life together may reflect your holiness.
Jesus Lord of your Church
In your mercy hear us

You have called us to be a light to the world so that those who live in darkness may come to you.
May our lives shine as witnesses to the saving grace you have given for all
Jesus Lord of your Church
In your mercy hear us

You have called us to be the Bride, where you Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast, where we will be united to you forever
Jesus Lord of your Church hear our prayer
And make us one in heart and mind to serve you with joy for ever. Amen

We offer these prayers as we say together the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples....
Our Father...

And, as your children we now come to your table at your gracious invitation.

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest
Take my yoke upon you and learn from me
for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light*

Welcomed by you, we take bread and remember your sacrifice for us on the cross
May this bread be for us the very body of Christ and strengthen us for your service
(we eat bread)

Loved by you, we take wine and remember the joy of your resurrection
May this wine be for us the very blood of Christ and give us joyful power to live in your love
(we drink wine, or a suitable alternative)

How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him!
The LORD builds up his people; he gathers the exiles. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. His understanding has no limit and he sustains the humble.
Sing to the LORD with grateful praise and make music to our God

Closing Hymn

Christ is the world's Light, Christ and none other;
born in our darkness, he became our Brother.
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's peace, Christ and none other;
no one can serve him and despise another.
Who else unites us, one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and none other;
give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;
give God the glory, God with us, my brother:
Glory to God on high.

Blessing

May we go and live the life of Heaven
May we go and live the life of blameless love
May we go and live the life of God's children

Blessed with every gift of God
May we be ever blessed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit