

Worship at Home - Sunday 19 December 2021

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people across the Methodist Connexion are sharing this act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

“Come thou long expected Jesus.”

Come to us Lord, where we are, however we are feeling, whatever is going on in our lives.

As you come to us, Lord Jesus, help us to reach out to you and to receive from you. Amen.

Hymn: StF 169 Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVI33j--eT8>

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 (1707-1788)

Let us pray together

As Mary sang, may our souls glorify you,
oh Lord; may our spirits rejoice in you.
We celebrate all the great things you have
done throughout time but we also
remember the simple things that you do
for each of us personally.

We thank you for the friends who
encourage us, the unexpected phone call,
the beauty of the natural world.
We thank you that you reach out to us
whatever we might be doing and however
we might be feeling. You stand watching,
waiting, ready to intervene at just the
right time and in just the right way.
We thank you, Mighty God, for all you
have done for us and continue to do for
us. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament:

Micah 5 vv 2-5a

[Micah 5 vv 2-5a](#)

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
³Therefore he shall give them up until the
time
when she who is in labour has brought
forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in
the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of
the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall
be great
to the ends of the earth;
⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

Today's Gospel Reading: Luke 1 vv 39-55

³⁹In those days Mary set out and went
with haste to a Judean town in the hill
country, ⁴⁰where she entered the house of
Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When
Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child
leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was
filled with the Holy Spirit ⁴²and exclaimed
with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among
women, and blessed is the fruit of your
womb. ⁴³And why has this happened to
me, that the mother of my Lord comes to
me? ⁴⁴For as soon as I heard the sound of
your greeting, the child in my womb
leaped for joy. ⁴⁵And blessed is she who
believed that there would be^[e] a
fulfillment of what was spoken to her by
the Lord."

⁴⁶And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my
Saviour,
⁴⁸for he has looked with favour on the
lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will
call me blessed;
⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great
things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the
thoughts of their hearts.
⁵²He has brought down the powerful from
their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³he has filled the hungry with good
things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵according to the promise he made to
our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants
forever."

Time to Reflect

I have sometimes had to pick strangers up
from the station to take them to various
events. I arrive early and wait a little
nervously, wondering whether I will spot
them easily or miss them entirely. Then,
there is the question about what they will
be like on the journey – will they be
sociable and chatty, silent and hard work,
grumpy after a difficult journey? Would
they live up to expectations?

The Jews had been waiting for centuries
for God's saviour. Some like Anna and
Simeon were alert, ready and waiting, but

others must have thought that it would never happen. Many were looking in the wrong places. They would also have wondered what that Saviour would be like and, again, many had come up with wrong ideas. Where do we look out for Jesus? What do we expect of him? Do we prepare ourselves for him?

Micah had warned that the Saviour would come from insignificant Bethlehem but still most missed God's blessing.

We might go through dark times and wonder where God's blessings for us are. We might be desperate for God to show himself to us but, still, we might miss what he has for us because we don't recognise the source. On the other hand, like Elizabeth, we might not think ourselves worthy of God's blessing.

A year ago, I went through a very hard time and could see no sign of God's blessings. I would have screamed at someone who suggested that God had blessings for me. However, I eventually saw odd chinks of light.

The Jews were waiting for a blessing from God. Some hung in there patiently; others gave up. God has blessings for us too. For some of us, they might be a while coming. They might come from unexpected sources and we need to look out for them. However, sooner or later, they will come.

Take a time to sit quietly. If things are good for you at the moment then thank God. If things are hard, you might want to shout out and cry to God. He will listen.

A time of prayer

Spend a moment thinking about the season.

Perhaps this is a joyful time for you but, perhaps, it brings up hard memories and other challenges. As you reflect on these things, offer them to God.

Lord, we recall how Elizabeth and Mary supported one another. We thank you for the support that we have received from other people and pray that we might see opportunities to help and support others. Then, for those things that we can't do, we place those people and situations into your caring hands.

Lord, we recall how you came to a forgotten backwater and bring to mind those in our society who are forgotten or marginalized. We pray that governments and individuals will be alert to those needs and will take action. Help us not to turn blind eyes on those in need.

Lord, we recall that Mary recognized how you were blessing her even though things would not have been easy. We reach out to receive your blessings for ourselves but also remember those who are not in a place to do that for themselves. Send your blessings Lord.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to StF 330 Joy to the World
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZhgp97y7Q>
or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,

and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

All Hymns reproduced under CCLi
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Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills and
plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Local Churches CCCLi 363610

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.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

We are grateful to all the Ministers and
Local Preachers from around the
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Worship at Home. This resource
is administrated by Ministries: Vocations
and Worship in the Connexional Team.

A prayer of blessing

The Lord will stand and feed his flock and
they will live secure in his strength; for
now he shall be great to the ends of the
earth and he shall be the one of peace.

(based on Micah 5 vv 4-5)

May we receive all that God has for us and
go forth in his peace.

Original Materials by Alan Darlington, local
preacher in the Sherwood Forest Circuit