

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

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

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.

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.

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)

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

All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

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

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.

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."

⁴⁶ And Mary said,

“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.”