

Sunday 5th December 2021 Advent 2

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As we worship together through Advent you may like to have four candles ready, one for each Sunday in Advent, lighting one more each week as we look at our Advent theme.

Have one candle lit.

God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
Though separate let us worship together in God.

God is love and is present in all life, in Jesus we glimpse the depth of this love and through Jesus we learn of the power of this love for all people. In advent we explore this love and wait for the time we celebrate God's love in Jesus and all humanity.

Suggested hymn Light of the world

Prayer

As we gather in this place, let us open our minds to the freedom that is God
As we gather in this place, let us open our hearts to the love that is God
As we gather in this place, let us open ourselves to new possibilities in the Spirit that is God.

Eternal God, source of all being, within your being all are holy and loved, all are forgiven and enabled to begin again, in your being is the breadth, height and depth of all creation. We are gathered in all that is, and when we accept this, our eyes are opened to the wonder and majesty that is life in all its fullness and we sense your call to grow in love and holiness.

Together In the power of the Spirit we can accomplish wonders beyond our knowledge and in love we can transform the world for those around us and beyond. As we wait in this time of Advent may our dreams be bigger and our desires more passionate that with the celebration of Christmas and new day will dawn and the kingdom come closer.

Our Father....

Week 2 – JOY

Joy is an attitude that God's people adopt because of hope in God's freedom.

Psalm 16:5-11

- ⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
- ⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- ⁸ I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
- ¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
- ¹¹ You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

We light this candle as a symbol of the joy that comes from hope in God. Joy is deeper than happiness and is an attitude of mind in which we choose to see God's love and blessings in the world around and live to bring joy to others through our words and actions

Sing together In the darkness comes a light,
Tune St Bees light of love for all to see.
 Hold the light within your heart
 bringing joy to those in fear.

Readings Malachi 3: 1 - 6
 Luke 1: 26-38

Reflection

Malachi speaks of the incarnation, the coming of God into the world, and in Jesus we have the fulfilment of the prophecy.

We know that Jesus challenged the ways of the world, just as Malachi predicted it would happen. Those whose actions hurt and oppress others or deny them their just reward or condemn people through prejudice are to be faced with the consequences of their actions.

Most Old Testament prophecy could be classed as bad news, beware you are on the wrong path, or you are ignoring God, but here we have some good news prophecy. It still speaks of purification and refining until they are like precious metals, but they are going to get help, the help of a messenger. Jesus points the way, but also shows the way. Jesus challenges but always offers hope. Through following the way of Jesus we are changed and begin to build new relationships of love. We also see things differently, recognising where human actions are hurting the planet, and where selfishness and greed are denying others an equal opportunity in life.

Story – Knowing when you have what you need

Once upon a time a fisherman sat on the harbour wall of his village, the sun shone down on him and his mind wandered. He owned a small boat which he took out every day to catch fish and sell to earn a living. As he gazed at the boat bobbing on the water he thought how lucky he was, he had his boat, his livelihood and the time to enjoy God's creation.

His daydreaming was suddenly interrupted when a smartly dressed, an slightly overweight man tapped him on the shoulder and asked him why he was not busy fishing instead of lazing about doing nothing. Somewhat taken aback the fisherman looked at the man and then gathering his thoughts replied that he had already done his day's fishing, been to market and sold his catch and was now relaxing.

The man then asked why he had not gone out to catch more fish. Puzzled the fisherman asked why he would do that, and the man answered so that he could make more money. Still puzzled the fisherman asked why he would need more money. The man replied that the fisherman could then buy a bigger boat to catch more fish and earn even more, then he could employ other people to do the fishing and eventually he could own a whole fleet of boats. The fisherman looked even more puzzled and again asked why he would want to do that.

The man looked at the fisherman and said that with more boats and people to do the fishing he would have more money than he could imagine, but the fisherman's answer remained the same, why would he want that. The man held his arms wide and said with all that money the fisherman could spend the rest of his life doing whatever he wanted, he could sit in the sun and relax with no worries, enjoying creation.

The fisherman shook his head and turned away to enjoy his daydreaming.

Based on a story, source unknown

Suggested Hymn Come thou long expected Jesus

Reading Malachi 3: 7-12
 Luke 1: 39-55

Reflection

We know from the Magnificat that the visitation of the angel filled Mary with joy, a joy which overflowed in praise of God.

When we miss the target of loving actions and are tempted to step off the way of Jesus we feel it as the opposite of joy and hide from God. Malachi's prophecy pulls no punches it is good news, but it also shines a light on how easy it is to follow the wrong path, even when you claim to be loving God but says the prophet if we do the loving thing, share what we have then we will know the joy of God's blessing. This is the blessing of knowing God, of building a relationship with the source of all being, and Jesus said this was eternal life. When we build this relationship, we find ourselves choosing joy in our lives.

Prophecy can be thought of as the connector pieces within scripture. We have the big events, but prophecy joins them, makes sense of them, because biblical prophecy was always written after the event about which it prophesies. It is the same in our lives we have the big events and it is easy to get carried away on adrenalin and emotion, and then find ourselves doing things which we regret later. We need to stop regularly on our journey and ask ourselves 'why did that happen, why did I do that'? By taking time to reflect we grow in wisdom and insight so that next time we will be wiser in our actions.

Suggested hymn The voice of God goes out to all the world

Readings Malachi 3: 13-18

Luke 1: 68-79

Reflection

Malachi's message was one of hope, but good news is only good news if you are open to the action it will have in your life. The good news of Jesus is a message of transformation, transforming the world through transforming people one person at a time and building the kingdom one piece at a time.

We have to take the time to recognise the choices which face us, and which will make a difference. We are part of a bigger story, we are part of all that is and we can also be the connector for others. We need to reflect so that we can share with others and encourage them to reflect. Sometimes we will have no idea how our actions have changed others but when we live our lives choosing joy we will make a difference. There are always two ways to see things – the glass can be half full or half empty – to live in hope is to choose to see the glass half full and celebrate the joy of knowing God.

Story - The joy of wisdom

In a land faraway a wise woman lived by herself in the mountains. She was deeply connected to the land on which she lived, she could read the winds and the clouds and lived in harmony with the birds and the animals with which she shared the mountains.

One day, as she was walking along a mountain trail, she came across a large stone on the path and she stopped to pick it up. She rubbed the stone and realised that it had an inner beauty which sparkled as the light caught it. Recognising that the stone was special she carried it home and placed it in the windowsill of her hut where it would catch the sunlight.

A few days later a traveller passed by and stopped to ask for directions. He saw the stone and commented on its beauty and the woman offered it to him. The traveller took the stone and thanked, then left on his journey very pleased with his gift. When he returned home, he showed the stone to a jeweller who told him it was a fine amethyst stone and very valuable. The traveller was overjoyed at his luck but as the days passed, he became more and more uncomfortable, believing that the woman in the mountains could have had no idea of its value. So, he returned to the mountains with the stone.

He found the wise woman at her home and offered her the stone, saying he had found out its worth and could not keep the stone. She invited him into her home and offered him some mountain tea. As they drank, she explained that she had known the value of the stone when she gave it to him but had recognised how much he loved the stone and wanted him to have it. The traveller was amazed and realised how wise and loving the woman was, they sat in silence for a while. Then the woman said that if he did not want to keep the stone

perhaps there was something else she could offer him, as a mark of their new friendship. The traveller thought for a while and then he said he would value her sharing the wisdom that guided her heart and made her so generous. That, he said, would be worth more than any precious stone, for it would bring joy into his life and the life of those he loved.

Based on a story, source unknown.

Suggested hymn 663 Love divine all love's excelling

Prayers

Loving God, in the unity of oneness we are freed from fear, and we can embrace friendship in its many forms. As we reflect on our lives, we recognise the many ways in which we are still held captive when we do not choose the joy of hope. When we allow ourselves to choose selfishness and let our emotions cloud our judgement, we find ourselves living in the dark and fearing others.

Living God may we choose joy and share your love with others.

As we wait in advent we hope for peace amongst your people, we pray for the peace that brings justice and can still the voice of self-interest that dominates the world's politics. We pray for the people whose lives are darkened by others seeing them as enemies, those who find themselves living in a war zone, the victims of wrong time, wrong place; we pray for all who risk their lives in the search for a better future for themselves and their family and then find themselves outcasts and the victim of suspicion; we pray for those who chose the wrong path and who have faced up to the consequences and yet still find themselves on the edge of society, excluded for community. May we remember how easy it is to make the wrong choice.

Living God may we choose joy and share your love with others.

As we pray together may we recognise those in our communities who feel unloved and uncared for. We think of children scavenging rubbish dumps, small farmers and traders who are overwhelmed by bigger businesses, the victims of events that are the result of climate change, and those who are alone and forgotten, desperate behind closed doors.

Living God may we choose joy and share your love with others.

Gracious God, held within your love may we reach out to our neighbours, offering the hope of friendship to those grieving a loss, struggling with broken relationships, or who are facing the struggle of illness, physical or mental, or the challenge of addiction. May our actions shine the light of Christ into the dark corners of the world.

Living God may we choose joy and share your love with others.

We offer you our time in the coming week. May we be open to your wisdom guiding our choices, and the presence of your love enabling and encouraging us to new ways as we seek to make a difference each day in some small way. May we recognise the value of creation, and the worth of every person as we walk the way of Jesus.

Living God may we choose joy and share your love with others. Amen

Our offering to God.

As we worship together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously and sharing the message of hope that is God's love.
Amen

Suggested hymn 135 Joy to the world

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.