

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Sunday 13th December 2020

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

Today is the third Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day is now less than two weeks away. May our worship today draw us closer to God and make us more ready to welcome Him. Let us be open to the Holy Spirit. Let us open our lives to the good news of Jesus. In this world of pain and darkness may He bring hope to our hearts.

Hymn/Song

Prayer of trust

In my moments of weariness, or weakness, or pressure, I know God is here. In my moments of pride, I know God is here. In my moments of demand, I know God is here. God is here, always, already, at once - holding, sustaining and creating a new creation, in me, in us, in all.

Lord Jesus, son of God and son of Mary,
you came among us, baptizing with fire and light,
calling us to the true vocation of humanity:
to reflect the glory of our creator.

We thank you for your work among us,
how you gathered, how you spoke,
how you ate and drank, how you left us your Spirit
to lift us up and hold us in the light.

We praise you, because you came to us,
and keep coming to us,
because of your great love.

Amen.

Bible Readings

Isaiah Chapter 61 verses 1-4 & 8-11
Luke Chapter 1 verses 46-55

Hymn/Song

Prayer of confession

This week we had good news of the first UK residents to receive the Coronavirus vaccine. We continue to wait patiently, not just for a cure, but also for the coming day of our Saviour Jesus Christ. He was born to be our Saviour. In the words of the hymn 'Rock of Ages' we ask that his blood will 'be of sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power'.

*O God, the Light of the heart that sees You,
The Life of the soul that loves You,
The Strength of the mind that seeks You,
May I ever continue to be steadfast in Your love.
Be the joy of my heart;
Take all of me to Yourself and abide therein.
The house of my soul is, I confess, too narrow for You.
Enlarge it that You may enter.
It is ruinous but do repair it.
It has within it what must offend Your eyes,
I confess and know it,
But whose help shall I seek in cleansing it but Yours alone?
To You, O God, I cry urgently.
Cleanse me from secret faults.
Keep me from false pride and sensuality
That they not get dominion over me.
Amen. (Augustine of Hippo)*

Sermon

"You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will live as one."
Forty years ago this week the voice of singer John Lennon was silenced at his untimely death.

The world he hoped for in his song 'Imagine' remains a dream. The apostle Paul wrote the equally famous words 'Now faith, hope and love remain – and the greatest of these is love'. In Advent we ponder how the dream of a better world and the song of a better world refuses to be silenced. The hope of a fairer world refuses to die. Faith, hope and love remain to this day. And because they remain, the potential for change is as great as ever.

Our Bible readings today explode with hope. Then, as now, news of the coming of Jesus Christ brings light and colour. Words of promise shine like a rainbow of hope through the gloom. The time of waiting was over. The Saviour of the world was imminent. The hope of the ages was about to be fulfilled. Ancient words would find new expression. All this was happening because the Holy Spirit was moving in a new and powerful way.

Today's scriptures told us of a new anointing of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit anointed Isaiah.

The Holy Spirit anointed Mary and blessed her with a song of praise.

The Holy Spirit anointed John the Baptist who paved the way for Jesus.

His message wasn't 'the end is nigh', but 'the Lord is nigh'.

The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus.

In Jesus the hope of Isaiah, the hope of Mary and of the hope of John the Baptist would fuse together and come to life.

A new season of the Spirit had come. The word became flesh.

Jesus preached good news to the poor, Jesus lifted the poor and lowly, Jesus gave sight to the blind, gave health to the diseased, Jesus fed the hungry, Jesus set men and women free from their sins and their shame, Jesus comforted the mourner and welcomed the outcast. Jesus brought heaven to earth.

Jesus' life was faith hope and love on two legs.

Jesus was like no one who had gone before.

God with us, Immanuel was come.

In the words of Charles Wesley's advent hymn, here was:

'The incarnate deity. Our God contracted to a span,
incomprehensibly made man'.

John the Baptist said 'you don't know him, but when he appears you can't miss him'.

And yet many did miss his coming and many still miss his coming today. Some choose to ignore him and reject him.

Some do not want their world shook, do not want their values questioned, do not want their powers and privileges usurped and some do not want their lives changed.

Some do not recognize the way of his coming.

The Christian writer Rob Lacy in his poem 'Not by might' expresses the worldly ways of winning hearts that Jesus rejected: 'Not by right, nor by repute, not by clout, nor by cute, not by charm, nor by choice, not by virile, nor by voice, not by looks, nor by loud, not by luck, nor by endowed, not by favours, nor by fight, not by brave, nor by bright, not by polish, nor by gleam, not by rule, nor by regime, not by focus, nor by tact, not by passion, nor by pact, not by push, nor by press, not by name, nor by address, not by steal, nor by sword, not by appeal, nor by applaud, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord'.

So in Advent we pray more earnestly 'Come Holy Spirit, come Lord Jesus. Bring new faith, hope and love to life - in your world, in your church and in me today. We need a new season of the Holy Spirit. Let it begin with me'.

Hymn/Song

Prayers of Intercession

God you are our maker and our Good Shepherd

Comfort your people **and make us ready for your coming.**

Where there is distress or sadness among us

Comfort your people **and make us ready for your coming.**

Where illness, grief or trouble diminishes our life and saps us of hope

Comfort your people **and make us ready for your coming.**

When our world changes and there is uncertainty about the future

Comfort your people **and make us ready for your coming.**

In both our willingness to serve and in our reluctance

Comfort your people **and make us ready for your coming.**

Across our Churches and within our communities

Comfort your people **and make us ready for your coming.**

(Name those on your heart today...and pray about your own needs)

(Finally, receive the comfort of God for yourself)

We pray that we may comfort others and be signposts to your coming in manger and in glory. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour and in the power of the Holy Spirit our Comforter.

Amen.

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray

The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/Song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.
Come Lord Jesus, come fill the earth with hope.
May the Lord lead you, with all his people, to the joy and peace of his kingdom. **Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- What does hope look like to you?
- Where have you unexpectedly found Jesus?
- In light of God's word, bring your hopes to God in prayer

Suggested Hymns and Songs

More Traditional Music:

O come, O come Immanuel
On Jordan's bank the baptist's cry
Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord

More Contemporary Music:

My hope is built on nothing less (Cornerstone)
Lord you have my heart
I the Lord of sea and sky

Keep social distancing.
Keep safe.
Keep communicating.
May your days be filled with the presence of the Lord.
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.
My prayers are with you.

With love,

Peter