

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Sunday 3rd January 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

Happy New Year! On this first Sunday of 2021 we worship God in our midst - Jesus Christ, Immanuel. We worship the God of our past, the God of the future, the God who is with us at all times and in all places, the God who is with us in this very moment. Let us give Him our highest New Year honours.

Hymn/Song

Prayer

Eternal and ever loving God, creator of life, and Lord of time, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we pray that we may stand with you. You have always been there: going before us to prepare the way, standing behind us, urging us on toward new hopes and a new creation, being with us in the company of your people and the life of your Holy Spirit. You have always been there, Lord, calling us again to follow you. Help us to walk quietly and thankfully away from the old year. We thank you for strength given amid suffering, and hope arising out of fear. Help us, today, to see this New Year as you see it. Help us to walk quietly and firmly toward its opportunities and demands. We dare to believe that this is a new day, and not a repeat of the year now gone. Your grace gives us courage. Your peace gives us hope. Your presence is the promise of new life. In Christ we can make a new beginning. By your Spirit we can be a new creation, for Christ came to us in Bethlehem to be ours forever. We praise and thank you and give you the glory.

Amen.

Bible Readings

Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 3-14
John Chapter 1 verses 1-18

Prayer – January Light

Lord, for many January is a dismal month. Grey skies and cold weather can leave us feeling low and feeling alone. We can feel in the dark. Lord Jesus you came to be the light of the world, the light of our life. We believe your light shines upon us and upon all today. The light of your love warms our hearts. The light of your peace eases our minds. As we journey through January, help us to look to your light and walk in your light. **Amen.**

Hymn/Song

Sermon

For the Christian, the message of Christmas does not get put away with the Christmas decorations. We take with us the good news of Christmas into this New Year. For we don't worship Christmas – we worship Christ. We worship Jesus Christ as our Lord and King today. He is good news for all people for all time. Why?

Because as we read in John 1 v 16

'From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace'.

That is the truth I hold out to you today.

That is the truth I invite you to pin your New Year hopes on.

'From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace'.

Every one of us has shared in his riches.

We look back at the year that has died and say thank you Lord Jesus for the riches of your grace that brought us through.

Every step of the way you were there for us. You supplied all our needs. We could not have made it through 2020 without you.

The fullness of your loving mercies meant that we lacked nothing.

Today we glorify God and say with St Paul 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing'. God was our provider and sustainer. We affirm today that our unchanging God will provide for us and sustain us through 2021.

'From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace'.

And there is more grace still to come.

God lavishes his grace on us, says St Paul.

What a wonderful word – Lavish.

Here is extravagant grace, abundant grace, more than we deserve. The same bible word is used in the gospels to describe the leftovers at the feeding of the 5,000. Here is more grace than we can imagine. It overflows into our lives. As we look to the future we can say there is grace in our lives because of his grace.

Today we receive God's lavish grace.

Let us receive those true graces of Christian character. Let us name them now: The grace of a thankful and uncomplaining heart.

The grace to hear and answer God's call on our life.

The grace to endure difficulty and trials.

The grace to boldly stand up for what is right.

The grace of bodily discipline.

The grace of strict truthfulness and honesty.

The grace to treat others as we would be treated ourselves.

The grace of silence that refrains from hasty judgement.

The grace of forgiveness to forgive in the same measure we have been forgiven.

The grace of confidence to develop our gifts and talents and exercise them in Christian service.

The grace of steadfastness to continue on the pilgrim way.

Truly, in Jesus we receive grace upon grace.

Friends, this is the good news which greets us at this New Year.

Into our place of need, into our unfulfilled hopes, grace comes.

There comes a fountain of grace from the heart of our Father God.

Whatever 2021 holds for us, the life of God and the love of God will sustain us on our journey.

Frances Ridley Havergal affirmed this truth with these words from her New Year hymn:

*For the year before us,
O what rich supplies!
For the poor and needy
Living streams shall rise;
For the sad and sinful
Shall his grace abound,
For the faint and feeble
Perfect strength be found...*

*He will never fail us,
He will not forsake;
His eternal covenant*

*He will never break!
Resting on His promise,
What have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient
For the coming year.*

God will give to us out of His fullness – we shall lack no good thing in 2021. So we can have confidence to say yes to the call of God upon our lives today.

We can say yes to loving and serving God best of all.

We say yes to prayer and worship.

We say yes to reading our Bibles and studying God's word.

We say yes to supporting each other, sharing one another's joys and sorrows.

We say yes to working for truth and justice.

We say yes to playing our part in the body of Christ and playing it well.

We say yes to sacrificial giving.

We say yes to our Christian witness at work and at home.

We say yes to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and action. We say yes to the God who says yes to us today.

Whatever we are called to in 2021 we can respond with fresh grace and join ourselves to God's eternal covenant and live for God's glory alone. We shall renew this covenant in our worship next Sunday. As we go into this new week, new month and New Year let us go immersed in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hymn/Song

Prayers of Intercession for Epiphany

Lord God, at Epiphany we remember how you revealed your Son Jesus to the nations by the leading of a star. At the beginning of this New Year, lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, shed your light upon us and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory.

In Thanksgiving we bring Gold.

God our Father, the coming of Jesus is the reason for our joy and the source of our peace. We thank you for the gift of your son to be our friend and our Saviour. We thank you for all we receive.

We thank you for the comfort and security of our homes.

We thank you for the circle of our church family and for good friends and neighbours. Thank you for the precious gift of your love. Help us to remember to say 'thank you'.

In Adoration we bring Frankincense.

God our Father, we kneel in worship, bowing low before you.

May our prayers rise to you like sweet smelling perfume.

Your great power was hidden by the weakness of a child, your majesty concealed by the poverty of the manger. We adore you in the person of Christ the Son as we celebrate his coming and remember his birth. Help us to live with open hands and open hearts this year.

In Petition we bring Myrrh

God our Father, for many, Christmas brought more sorrow than joy, more sadness than happiness. We remember them now and hold them before you. Be with them and with all who seek to bring them help. We remember the lonely, the homeless, and those unwell. In the days to come help us to look beyond ourselves to these who need your love and care most of all. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, God with us, **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.

We brought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out.

So, make us good stewards of all we possess.

Now may the strength of God surround you, the promise of God protect you, the grace of God guide you and His blessing rest upon you. **Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- What of 2020 do you need to let go of? Give it over to God.
- What are you most hopeful/fearful about at New Year?
- Where do you need God's lavish grace most in your life?

Suggested Hymns and Songs

More Traditional Music:

Great is Thy faithfulness
Lord for the years
To God be the glory

More Contemporary Music:

Shine Jesus shine
Faithful God
In Christ alone

Keep social distancing.
Keep safe.
Keep communicating.
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.
My prayers are with you.

With love,

Peter