

Sunday January 2nd 2022: Second Sunday of Christmas

For use at 10.30 am or other suitable time.

The material for this Worship at Home Sheet has been prepared by Rev Rosemary Wakelin.



Every blessing to you all on this first Sunday of the New Year!

Today is also the Epiphany when we remember the visit of the Wise Men to the infant Jesus, and for many of us it is the day we renew our Covenant.

Hymn StF 127 H&P 360

Sing to the great Jehovah's praise / all praise to him belongs;
who kindly lengthens out our days / demands our choicest songs.

His providence has brought us through / another various year;
we all with vows and anthems new / before our God appear.

Our lips and lives shall gladly show / the wonders of thy love,
while on in Jesus' steps we go / to see thy face above.

Our residue of days or hours / thine, wholly thine, shall be
and all our consecrated powers / a sacrifice to thee.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)



Prayer

Our Gracious God, as we step out into your gift of this New Year, may we go in your company. Your world is troubled with much to worry us and many unsolved problems. So much that is wrong is the result of human greed and thoughtlessness. But it is your world, and we are your people and you work through those who are willing to work with you. May we keep close to you in the coming days sharing your vision of the Kingdom. We confess we so often forget you and get weighed down with the darkness around, we ask for your forgiveness and help to lift our gaze to you and see your star of love and follow where you lead, our hope re-kindled and our strength renewed.

Gospel Reading set for today: Matthew 2 v 1 – 12

Reflection

Matthew we are told wrote his Gospel for a Jewish readership, and here is the wonderful revelation that God's love and Kingdom is not just for Abraham's descendants but for the whole world. Abraham had been told that all the world would be blessed through his people, but that bit had got lost down the years, and by the time Jesus came Messiah was seen as exclusively for the "Chosen People". So, Matthew puts it straight, Jesus is for everyone, and shock horror, God is quite happy communicating with receptive people who are not Jews! Maybe Christians need to think about that too!

StF 222

Who would think that what was needed / to transform and save the earth
might not be a mighty army / proud in purpose, proved in worth?

Who would think, despite derision, that a child might lead the way?

God surprises earth with heaven / coming here on Christmas Day.

Shepherds watch and wise men wonder / monarchs scorn and angels sing;

Such a place as none would reckon / hosts a holy helpless thing.

Stable beasts and by-passed strangers / watch a baby laid in hay:

God surprises earth and heaven / coming here on Christmas Day.

Centuries of skill and science / span the past from which we move,
yet experience questions whether / with such progress, we improve.

While the human lot we ponder / lest our hopes and humour fray,

God surprises earth and heaven / coming here on Christmas Day.

John L Bell (b 1949) and Graham Maule (1958 - 2020) CCL nos. 5365402

It is also Covenant Sunday introduced to the Methodist people by John Wesley.

So, we read what the prophet Jeremiah said: Jeremiah 31 v 31 – 34

Reflection

That first Covenant with Abraham was revolutionary. At a time when everyone worshipped a god of some sort, Abraham had become aware of that “Other” as someone who spoke to him and who would listen to him, and with whom he could have a relationship, and even more a relationship of love and trust. He was the pioneer of our faith. But that relationship had got lost down the years and had become ritualised, codified and mechanical- more like ticking boxes. Jeremiah saw this and tells of a restoring if the original intention, not ticking boxes but a living relationship, and later on that is exactly what Jesus did at the cost of his life. But it was that relationship that kick started the Church. In the 18th century the Church was in a sorry state and that was when John Wesley did a Jeremiah, he called his followers to make their own Covenant Relationship with God. I remember vividly, when I was 14, our minister preaching on this amazing Idea that the incomprehensible Power that kick started the Creation should want to come into relationship with part of the Creation, and that we should presume to take him up on it! But that is the wonderful meaning of the Covenant Service:

“I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace. Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing. I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose. Glorious and blessed God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. May it be so for ever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven. Amen”.

This Covenant is renewed every year by Methodists and other Christians around the world.

Prayers of Intercession

For the world, endangered by human greed and indifference,
For the natural world and the creatures who share it with us,
For the leaders of the nations, for sisters and brothers living in hunger and danger,
For all suffering from the pandemic and those who seek to serve them,
For the Church throughout the world that it may be true to the Gospel,
For any we know who are in special need: the homeless, the abused, those in prison, the elderly, the sick,
Our friends and dear ones. Ourselves with our own private grief and pain, and we give thanks for the love and joy in our lives as we give and receive in the family of Love.

Hymn StF 550 H&P 381

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go / my daily labour to pursue.
thee, only thee, resolved to know / in all I think, or speak, or do.
The task thy wisdom has assigned / O let me cheerfully fulfil,
in all my works thy presence find / and prove thy good and perfect will.
Give me to bear thy easy yoke / and every moment watch and pray,
and still to things eternal look / and hasten to thy glorious day.
Give me to bear thy easy yoke / and every moment watch and pray,
and still to things eternal look / and hasten to thy glorious day.
For thee delightfully employ / whate’ere thy bounteous grace has given,
and run my course with even joy / and closely walk with thee to heaven.

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

**The blessing of the God of love who made us for loving,
the blessing of the Son who came at Christmas to bear the cost of loving,
and the blessing of the Spirit who enables us to love and be loved be with us always. Amen.**

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND MANY BLESSINGS FOR 2022