**Westfield 10.30 am Advent 2 6th December 2020**

**Call to Worship** Psalm 85:10-11, 13

**Hymn MP 41**

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,

every tongue confess him King of glory now.

‘Tis the Father’s pleasure we should call him Lord,

who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Mighty and mysterious in the highest height ,

God from everlasting, very Light of light.

In the Father’s bosom, with the Spirit blest,

love, in love eternal, rest, in perfect rest.

Humbled for a season, to receive a Name

from the lips of sinners unto whom he came,

Faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,

brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

Bore it up triumphant with its human light,

through all ranks of creatures, to the central height;

to the throne of Godhead, to the Father’s breast,

filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue

all that is not holy, all that is not true.

crown him as your captain in temptation’s hour,

let his will enfold you in its light and power.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus shall return again

with his Father’s glory, with his angel train;

for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,

and our hearts confess him King of glory now.

Caroline maria Noel (1817-77) CCLI 150801

**Prayer and Lord’s Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we come to worship you on this second Sunday in Advent and to continue our preparations for the coming of our Lord. We thank you that we are able to come together again and come with open hearts and minds to listen to your voice, to be uplifted and encouraged and pointed again towards the special time of Christmas when we celebrate the incarnation, God becoming man, and your first step towards redeeming the whole of mankind and drawing us back to yourself. We thank you for your love for each one of us, that you made us in your image, and ask for your forgiveness for those times when we fall short of what you expect of us. In that way help us we pray to make each day a new start in our relationship with you and in our calling to serve you and the community in which you have set us. We ask you to bless our time of worship in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as we share in the prayer he taught us….. Lord’s Prayer.

**Notices, Offering and Mission Prayer.**

**Bible Readings** Isaiah 40:1-11 and Mark 1:1-8

**Hymn MP 1008**

The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want.

He makes me lie in pastures green.

He leads me by the still, still waters,

His goodness restores my soul

*And I will trust in You alone,*

*and I will trust in You alone,*

*for Your endless mercy follows me,*

*Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,

and He anoints my head with oil,

and my cup, it overflows with joy,

I feast on His pure delights.

*And I will trust....*

And though I walk the darkest path,

I will not fear the evil one,

for You are with me, and Your rod and staff

are the comfort I need to know.

*And I will trust....*

Psalm 23adapted Stuart Townend © 1996 Thankyou Music CCLI 150801

**Preparing the Way**

Last week Kath reflected on the story of Mary and Elizabeth and how Mary’s song of praise was pointing towards the way the ministry of Jesu would be seen as extremely radical to the orthodox Jews.

Today the reading from Isaiah talks again of dramatic changes, the changes that the coming of the promised Messiah would bring and therefore not changes to be feared but changes that would bring hope to the people of God.

Having grown up in the hills of the Pennines I found that when I moved to Kirkham on the Fylde where it is virtually flat I could not find the same sense of beauty and distance as I could with the rolling hills.

At St Annes on Sea, just down the road and where I ran a half marathon, the biggest hills are where the road goes over the railway line and to go to that from living with Pendle Hill there in the distance was one of the things I really missed.

In Foulridge, the village where I lived, we always said that if we could move Pendle Hill we would get a lot less rainfall and joked about ‘having enough faith to move mountains.’

Isaiah, however, was not talking about the physical removal of mountains and using the material to fill valleys to create a flat, boring tundra like land but recognising the enormous changes that the world would have to make when God sent his promised Son.

It is a reminder of God’s power over creation and for his readers Isaiah’s reminder too of the fragility of human life, being as weak and vulnerable as grass and wild flowers and yet despite the shortness of human life a reminder too that the promises God has made to us will last for ever.

Words of wisdom, words of warning and words of hope in God and his plan for the future.

God’s plan which Mark begins to record for us by reflecting on that passage from Isaiah and then pointing to John the Baptist as the messenger God had sent to prepare the way for Jesus.

John didn’t come to move mountains but he came with a message that could remove the burdens which seemed like mountains from the shoulders of the Jewish people.

Weighed down by their attempts to keep to the word of the Law John came offering an opportunity to release themselves from the burden by the process of repentance, baptism and forgiveness and through that process preparing themselves for the coming of the promised Messiah.

The message was new because in calling for repentance it showed that each person was responsible for their own relationship with God and the way they lived within that relationship too.

The message was new because it offered them baptism and the only ones who previously needed to be baptised were those who turned to Judaism from other religions.

The message was new because it offered them forgiveness and in doing so it negated the need for the people to go and make a sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem. This was Good News.

It was an opportunity for them to change and in doing so they could begin to change the world around them.

But that was not the end, it was only the beginning.

The opportunity for repentance would set their relationship to God on a new plane as each could then have a direct relationship without the need for the Priests to act as intermediaries but they would find that these personal relationships would require real commitment, openness and honesty with God.

The opportunity for baptism would enable them to both symbolically and publicly express their desire to repent by being washed clean as they were immersed in and rose from the waters of the River Jordan.

The opportunity for forgiveness would give them the chance to make a new start, putting the past behind them and looking forward to a new life of freedom in God.

So it was a big first step for those who responded to John’s preaching but Mark also pointed them ahead to the fact that when the Messiah came he would baptise them not by a symbolic outward washing but with an inward cleansing through repentance and the indwelling of his Holy Spirit.

So John prepared them for the deeper spiritual teachings of Jesus and as we read the passages today it is a challenge for us to prepare ourselves too for the coming of Jesus again at Christmas by looking at our individual lives.

Are there particular things which we find a burden to carry, which have a bad affect on the way we live?

If so we have the opportunity to ask God to take that load from us and give us a new start.

Most of us will have been baptised as children but there are times when we all need to ask God to fill us again with his Holy Spirit to help us to refresh and renew our relationship with him.

John the Baptist’s message may well have been directed to the Jewish people in a different culture and situation 2000 years ago but it was to the chosen people of God and as the new people of God, the followers of Jesus Christ, we too must do what we need to do in our lives today to prepare the way again for the coming of our Lord.

**Hymn MP 538**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

announces that the Lord is nigh;

come then and listen, for he brings

glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every heart from sin;

make straight the way for God within;

prepare we in our hearts a home,

where such a mighty guest may come.

For You are our salvation, Lord,

our refuge and our great reward;

without Your grace we waste away,

like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick stretch out Your hand,

make wholeness flow at Your command;

sin’s devastation now restore

earth's own true loveliness once more.

To Him who left the throne of heaven

to save mankind, all praise be given;

to God the Father, voices raise,

and Holy Spirit, let us praise.

CHARLES COFFIN (1676-1749) tr JOHN CHANDLER (1806-76) CCLI 150801

**Prayers of Intercession**

Please use Neil’s prayer sheet as he is also duty elder.

**Lighting of second Advent Candle**

**People who listened**

Today is the second Sunday in Advent and we look back to the Prophets who listened to God and brought his word to the people. We remember people like Jonah, and Isaiah and Amos and Malachi who spoke out against the disobedience of the people and offered them a new beginning. We light two candles to remember those who waited and those who listened and pray that their light might light our path as we travel through Advent together.

**Light Candle**s

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, help us to listen to and obey your word so that we can follow the path Jesus set for us. Amen.

**Shine Share**

**Hymn MP 554**

Peace is flowing like a river,

flowing out through you and me,

spreading out into the desert,

setting all the captives free,

setting all the captives free.

Love is flowing…

Joy is flowing…

Faith is flowing…

Hope is flowing…

CCLI 150801

**Communion**

Jesus said: “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness”. He also said “Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Prayer

With joy we give you thanks and praise, Almighty God, Source of all life and love, that we live in your world, that you are always creating and sustaining it by your power, and that you have so made us that we can know and love you, trust and serve you.

We give you thanks that you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.

We praise you that he took our nature and was born as the child of Mary, that he might share our life,

reveal your love, reconcile us to yourself, and give us power to become your children.

We praise you that after he had suffered and been put to death on the Cross he was raised from the dead by your power; that he is the true Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world;

and that by his glorious resurrection he has restored to us eternal life and given us the joy of your kingdom.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and these your gifts of bread and wine, that ........

the bread which we break may be the communion of the body of Christ,

and the cup which we bless may be the communion of the blood of Christ.

give us grace to share his sufferings and to know the power of his resurrection, that we may be made one and ever more abide in him, to your praise and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Sharing of the Bread and Wine

As we gather at this table, we remember that Jesus was born of Mary; he lived our common life on earth; he suffered and died for us; on the third day he rose again; and he is always present through the Holy Spirit.

In his presence, and in the company of all the people of God, past, present, and to come, we celebrate the Supper of our Lord, who....... on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said **"This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."**

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."**

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The sharing of the bread and wine

**The bread** which we break is the communion of the body of Christ. Take it, eat it; it is the body of Christ given for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

**The cup** of blessing which we bless is the new covenant in the blood of Christ shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin: drink of it.

Prayer

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise, that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. May we who share Christ's body live his risen life; we who drink his cup bring life to others;

we who the Spirit lights give light to the world. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us;

so that we and all your children may be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

**Hymn MP 602**

Sing we the King who is coming to reign,

glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain;

life and salvation His empire shall bring,

joy to the nations when Jesus is King.

*Come, let us sing: praise to our King.*

*Jesus our King, Jesus our King:*

*this is our song, who to Jesus belong:*

*glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.*

All men shall dwell in His marvellous light,

races long severed His love shall unite;

justice and truth from His sceptre shall spring,

wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King.

*Come, let us sing* . . .

All shall be well in His kingdom of peace,

freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;

foe shall be friend when His triumph we sing,

sword shall be sickle when Jesus is King.

*Come, let us sing* ...

Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;

doubt shall not darken His witness within;

hell hath no terrors, and death hath no sting;

love is victorious, when Jesus is King.

*Come, let us sing* ...

Kingdom of Christ, for thy coming we pray,

hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day;

when this new song Thy creation shall sing,

Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King.

*Come, let us sing* ...

Charles Silvester Home (1865-1914) CCLI 150801

**The Blessing**

The love of Christ - surround us

The light of Christ - lead us

The peace of Christ - fill us

The power of Christ - aid us

The joy of Christ - thrill us

The presence of Christ - be with us ever more. AMEN