



Advent 2

6 December 2020

The Bell is rung and we stand for the Bible- sign of the enduring and ongoing word of God.

Acknowledgement of First peoples and Ancestors.

We acknowledge this land as that cared for and nurtured by the people of the Kulin nation from time immemorial.

This is the land where the people of the Wurundjeri language gathered and celebrated their stories, songs and dances passed on by their ancestors and the Great Spirit of the Dreaming over countless generations.

We acknowledge these ancestors and give thanks for their memory.

We also give thanks for the foremothers and forefathers of our St. Andrews' Uniting Church and the Hanbit Church; all those who have given their gifts and graces to be a shining light of God in the Christ among us for the wider Community of which we are a part.

To the community of saints, living and of the past, named and unnamed we give honour and respect.

The Advent Wreath is lit.

Hymn 289

*'Christmas is coming'
the church is glad to sing
and let the Advent candles
brightly burn in a ring.*

*The first is for God's promise
to put the wrong things right,
and bring to earth's darkness
the hope of love and light.*

*'Christmas is coming'
the church is glad to sing
and let the Advent candles
brightly burn in a ring.*

*The second for the prophets
who said that Christ would come
with good news for many and
angry words for some.*

*'Christmas is coming'
the church is glad to sing
and let the Advent candles
brightly burn in a ring.*

Invocation

*What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,
waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,
But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and
a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:11-13*

The Christ will not turn away from us

Prepare, then yourself this day with a faith which carries us towards the
presence of God without fear.

For the Christ will come in love, the Christ will come with grace upon grace.

Discover now the power of the Holy Spirit as we approach in faith in this act of
worship.

***Let us rise in our gathered company; and in the gentleness of your being
among us show us who we are as your faithful people.***

Welcome and the Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and with you

News of the Church

Hymn 265

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O come, great Lord of might
who to the tribes on Sinai's height in
ancient times didst give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home
make safe the way that leads on high
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan' tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save
and give them victory o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

O come, O dayspring, come
and cheer our spirits by your advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

The Visited Planet J. B. Phillips

Once upon a time a noticeably young angel was being shown around the splendours and glories of the universe by a senior and experienced angel. To tell the truth, the little angel was beginning to be tired and a little bored. He had been shown whirling galaxies and blazing suns, infinite distances in the deathly cold of interstellar space, and to his mind there seemed to be an awful lot of it all. Finally, he was shown the galaxy of which our planetary system is but a small part. As the two of them drew near to the star which we call our sun and to its circling planets, the senior angel pointed to a small and rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis. It looked as dull as a dirty tennis ball to the little angel, whose mind was filled with the size and glory of what he had seen.

Senior: "I want you to watch that one particularly", said the senior angel, pointing with his finger.

Junior: "Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me," said the little angel. "What's so special about that one?"

Senior: "That," replied the senior angel solemnly, "is the Visited Planet".

Junior: "Visited? Said the little one. "You don't mean visited by?"

Senior: "Indeed I do. That ball, which no doubt looks to you small and insignificant and not, perhaps, overclean, has been visited by our young Prince of Glory."

And at these words he bowed his head reverently. The little angel's face wrinkled in disgust.

Junior: "Do you mean to tell me" , he said, "that he stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball?"

Senior: "I do, and I don't think he would like you to call them 'creeping, crawling creatures' in that tone of voice, For, strange as it may seem to us, he

loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like him”.

The little angel looked blank. Such a thought was almost beyond his comprehension.

“Close your eyes for a moment,” said the senior angel,” and we will go back in what they call time.”

While the little angel’s eyes were closed and the two of them moved nearer to the spinning ball, it stopped its spinning, spun backwards quite fast for a while, and then slowly resumed its usual rotation.

Senior: “Now look!”

As the little angel did as he was told, there appeared, here and there, on the dull surface of the globe little flashes of light, some merely momentarily and some persisting for quite a time.

“Well, what am I seeing now?” queried the little angel.

“You are watching this little world as it was some thousands of years ago,” replied his companion. “Every flash and glow of light that you see is something of the father’s knowledge and wisdom breaking into the minds and hearts of people who live upon Earth, as it came to be called. Not many people, you see, can hear his voice or understand what he says even though he is speaking gently and quietly to them all the time.”

The earth went on turning and circling round the sun, and then, quite suddenly, in the upper half of the globe, there appeared a light, tiny, but so bright in its intensity that both the angels hid their eyes.

“I think I can guess”, said the little angel in a low voice. “That was the Visit, wasn’t it?”

Senior: “Yes, that was the Visit. The light himself went down there and lived among them; but in a moment, and you will be able to tell that even with your eyes closed, the light will go out.”

In utter blackness the earth turned round three times; and then there blazed with unbearable radiance a point of light.

“What now?” asked the little angel, shielding his eyes.

“They killed him all right. The thing most of them dread and fear all their lives, he broke and conquered. He rose again, and a few of them saw him and from then on became his utterly devoted slaves”

“Thank God for that,” said the little angel.

“Amen. Open your eyes now, the dazzling light has gone. The Prince has returned to his home of light. But watch the earth now”.

As they looked, in place of the dazzling light there was a bright glow which throbbed and pulsated. And then, as the earth turned many times, little points of light spread out. A few flickered and died: but, for the most part, the

lights burned steadily, and, as they continued to watch, in many parts of the globe, there was a glow over many areas.

Senior: "You see what is happening?" asked the senior angel. "The bright glow is the company of loyal men and women he left behind, and with his help they spread the glow and now lights begin to shine all over the Earth."

"Yes, yes," said the little angel impatiently, "but how does it end? Will the little lights join up with each other? Will it all be light, as it is in heaven?"

His senior shook his head. "We simply do not know. It is in the Father's hand. Sometimes it is agony to watch and sometimes it is joy unspeakable. The end is not yet. But I am sure you can see why this little ball is so important. He has visited it; he is working out his plan upon it.

Junior: "Yes, I see though I don't fully understand. But I shall never forget that this is the Visited Planet. He has visited it; he is working out his plan upon it."

Imaginary? Fanciful? Certainly.

But in the eyes of the eternal universe this little planet is of the highest importance simply because it is the Visited Planet.

Cosmic Praise

Lord of all the children of the stars,
in whatever form you have shaped them,
by whatever name they serve you
help us on this planet Earth, our home,
to keep our minds and hearts
attuned to every pulse of your cosmic Spirit.
Focus our lives on your special visitation
in our Saviour Christ, from whom
nothing in heaven or earth can separate us.
Join our service and our worship
to all the praise that at this moment rises
from loving spirits throughout creation.
For yours is the kingdom
the power and the glory
forever and everywhere. Amen

Bruce Prewer

Gospel Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

**"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way,
the voice of one crying in the wilderness:**

**'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,' "**

John appeared, baptising in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

This is the gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus was able to build on John's ministry and to show that the stern and forbidding man in the wilderness proclaiming the need to confess one's sins was the precursor of the One who would proclaim the compassionate God inviting us to bring all that we are to Him without fear or guilt for in the Christ is the path of love and freedom.

Hymn 647

*Comfort, comfort all my people
with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people
all your sins are taken away.*

*Though your tears be rivers running,
though your tears be an ocean full,
though you cry with the hurt of living:
comfort, comfort
Every valley shall be lifted,
every mountain shall be low,
every rough place shall be smoother:
comfort, comfort*

*Comfort, comfort all my people
with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people
all your sins are taken away.*

*Though your eyes see only darkness,
though your eyes can see no light,
though your eyes see pain and sorrow:
comfort, comfort.*

*Every night will have its morning,
every pain will have an end,
every burden will be lightened:
comfort, comfort.*

*Comfort, comfort all my people
with the comfort of my Word.
Speak it tender to my people
all your sins are taken away.*

Offering, Prayers of Thanksgiving and for Others and Lord's Prayer

Blessings and honour to you, O God, for you bring us into truth in ways which invite the creation of true community for all humankind and the whole creation.

We thank you that you so love us that you ask grander and greater things of us in the great faith adventure. It is in that same strong spirit that we bring you our prayers as we try to join your dreams and to carry your cross of costly love towards our neighbours. These are those who move our hearts in concern today, O God. And so we bring them before you in our prayers.

Hear our prayers, loving Christ, and make your hopes alive in all that we do.

Inspire in us a prophetic sense of this time in human history.

Speak in healing and kindness into our own lives, Christ among us. Give us new meaning and purpose in all that we are and do. Bring our individual lives into the focus of your being among us.

Hear our prayers, O God of infinite love and compassion as we strive to be your faithful people.

Benediction

May the whole earth be restored to hope,
the heavens sing aloud with the promise of what is to come
and God in Three Persons, the Holy Trinity,
be with us in every moment.

Amen

Reverend Graeme Kerr