

## ***Morning Worship for Advent 2***

### ***Preparation***

It is time for us to wake out of sleep,  
for deliverance is nearer to us now than it was when first we believed.  
It is far on in the night; day is near.  
Let us therefore cast off the deeds of darkness  
and put on our armour as soldiers of the light.  
The grace and peace of God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you  
**All and also with you.**

Lighting of the Advent candle *Week 2*

God, the mighty God,  
bends down in love to earth.  
Maranatha!  
**Come, Lord Jesus!**

We long for the peace of Christ in our world  
**Come Prince of Peace**

*The second candle is lit and this response is used*

Listen for the voice of the prophet crying in the wilderness:  
prepare the way of the Lord.  
**Come Prince of Peace**

The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him  
and the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.  
**Christ, shine on the earth today.**

*We confess our sins*  
When the Lord comes,  
he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,  
and will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the Father of all mercies cleanse you from your sins and restore you in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### ***Praise***

O Lord, open our lips:  
**And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

Let us worship the Lord:  
**All praise to his name.**

*A song of God's herald (Isaiah 40:9-11)*

**Lift up your voice with strength, O herald of good tidings.**

**Go up to a high mountain, herald of good tidings to Zion; lift up your voice with strength, herald of good tidings to Jerusalem. Lift up your voice, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!'**  
**See the Lord God, coming with power, coming to rule with his mighty arm.**  
**He brings his reward for the people of God, the recompense for those who are saved.**  
**God will feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs in his arms;**  
**He will hold them to his breast, and gently lead those that are with young.**  
**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning is now, and shall be for ever. Amen.**  
**Lift up your voice with strength, O herald of good tidings.**

### ***The word of God***

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.  
Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.' A voice says, 'Cry out!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass

withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

This is the word of the Lord; **thanks be to God** (Isaiah 40:1–11)

*Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark*

**Glory to you, O Lord**

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord; **Praise to you O Christ** (Mark 1:1–8)

*A Reflection by Gordon Gray*

On some Sundays when it is my turn to preach I read the readings with a certain amount of dread. What does the gospel story mean? What can I say? But this week the readings are a joy. Today, my initial reaction to the readings in both today's Old Testament reading and the gospel is to make me want to burst into song.

It may be an aria from Handel's Messiah and this week's Old Testament reading provides plenty of scope for choice (*Every valley shall be exalted – and the glory, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed – he shall feed his flock like a shepherd*); and the gospel reminds me of one of the songs from Godspell (*Prepare ye the way of the Lord*).

Maybe the response to spontaneously burst into song is exactly what we should be doing because a huge amount of our Bible is written in to be

sung. For example the Book of Psalms was the Hebrew hymn book and we catch a glimpse of this on Palm Sunday when we hear that the procession was surrounded by the crowd singing popular choruses - Hosanna in the Highest.

But our joyful response shouldn't necessarily be limited just to singing. There is a great deal of poetry in our Bible, though our various translations tend not to make it easy to spot rhyming verse. And there is another form of writing that is often used by the writers of our Bible that despite the limitations of translation we should sometimes be able to spot if we are aware of what to look for. Knowledge of this construction has the additional benefit of helping the reader identify the principal message of the story. This story telling format is known as chiasma.

I expect you all know what that is? No? Well, let me tell you a little about chiasma. It's a form of poetry that enables the reader to anticipate the climax of what is written. Let me illustrate the style by a simple example.

Imagine an extract, say a parable, from the Bible comprising 5 phrases. The chiasmic structure includes an important word in Phrase 1. That important word is repeated in Phrase 5. Similarly, another important word is included in Phrases 2 and 4. Finally, the key message of the parable is found in Phrase 3. I'll give you some examples of this format in a short while but first I'll illustrate the format by a longer example, this time with 7 phrases, with which we are all familiar. It's the story of Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus is the subject of Phrase 1 and Phrase 7. In Phrase 1 Zacchaeus is described as being very rich but used his wealth for his own benefit. You may recall that at the end of the story Zacchaeus gives away a lot of his money – his wealth is used to the benefit of many. Working towards the middle of the story we hear that Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus but can't because of the hostile crowd. The corresponding phrase at Phrase 6 we hear that the crowd is still angry because Jesus has gone to Zacchaeus's house. Still working towards the middle of the story we read that in order to see Jesus Zacchaeus climbs up into a Sycamore tree and it won't surprise you to recall that in Phrase 5 Zacchaeus climbs down the tree.

Finally we come to the heart of the story, Phrase 4, the central phrase in which we would expect to find the key message of the story: "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for I must stay at your house today So here is the key message of the parable, which is Jesus's unexpected loved for the tax collector.

A secondary benefit of using this chiasmic format is that it makes it easy to remember the story. If we want to retell the story of Zacchaeus we don't have to remember every detail, just the key words: Zacchaeus, Crowd, the Tree, Unexpected love.

Here are just a few of the stories that are written in this chiasmic format:

- Jesus the good shepherd (John 10)
- The call of Peter (Luke 5)
- Isaiah 41
- Jesus reading from the scroll in Galilee (Luke 6:16-31)
- The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)
- the burial of Jesus (Mat 25:40-47)
- the resurrection (Mk 18:1-8)
- The Syro Phoenician woman (Mat 13:21-28)
- The parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13)
- The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10)

If you would like to find out more I'd like to recommend this book, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes by Kenneth E Bailey. It's one of the best books I have ever come across and I would recommend it for many reasons, but if I had to only name one reason then it would be for the wonderful interpretation of the story of the Good Samaritan. I only have one copy of the book but any of you are welcome to borrow it.

### ***Our faith***

*Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit*

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary**

**and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,**

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

### *Prayers of Intercession led by Barbara Morton*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, as we travel through this Advent season, help us to prepare our hearts for your coming. Show us what changes we need to make in our lives so that we may be fit representatives of your message of love. We ask your blessing on the church here in Eaton Bray, and for those with the responsibility of making sure all runs smoothly. We pray for Joy, Stephen and Gordon, Catherine and Angela our Church Wardens, and our PCC. Strengthen our bishops, and all your church in the service of Christ, that those who confess your name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those living in our villages. We pray for our family life together. Help us all especially in this very difficult year, amid the busy preparations for the Christmas celebrations, to make time to think about the true meaning of what we celebrate, and to teach our children in the right way. Help us all to be aware also of the natural world around us, and to be mindful of the right way to use such resources.

We bring before you many places in the world where there is strife. In some, life goes on in an uneasy peace, in others there is full-scale fighting, but all the people in these places need your love in their lives, just as we

do. We are unable to love our enemies in our own strength. Give us your love in our hearts, that we may love our neighbours as we do ourselves. We pray that you will help our leaders to be courageous in striving for peace.

We pray for everyone who is working to combat the Coronavirus. We ask for your strength to get through this period. Help us to remember the many blessings that we enjoy, and to reach out to others who may be feeling particularly low. Give us patience to comply with rules set so that we can stay safe and keep others safe too.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. We pray for those whose names are on the prayer request list and any known personally to us. We remember them now in a time of silence.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Hear us as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ. Give their families and loved ones your comfort in their terrible loss. We remember also those whose year's mind falls at this time.

According to your promises, grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

**Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Hark! The glad sound, the Saviour comes.  
The Saviour promised long.  
Let every heart prepare a throne  
And every voice a song.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and all Christian people to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

*A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic*

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.*

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

***Conclusion***

*The Collect for the day*

O Lord, raise up, we pray, your power  
and come among us,  
and with great might succour us;  
that whereas, through our sins and wickedness  
we are grievously hindered  
in running the race that is set before us,  
your bountiful grace and mercy  
may speedily help and deliver us;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen

With love and compassion,  
**come, Lord Jesus.**

With judgement and mercy,  
**come, Lord Jesus.**

In power and glory,  
**come, Lord Jesus.**

In wisdom and truth,  
**come, Lord Jesus.**

*We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person, nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
and the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

May the Lord Jesus, when he comes, find us watching and waiting. **Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.*

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Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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