

Traditional Home service Sunday 13th December Advent 3

OPENING PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, who at your first coming sent your messenger to prepare your way before you: grant that the ministers and stewards of your mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready your way by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at your second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in your sight; for you are alive and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

All Lord our God, in our sin we have avoided your call. Our love for you is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Have mercy on us; deliver us from judgement; bind up our wounds and revive us; in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts. Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (O Come O Come Emmanuel)

READINGS - Isaiah 61.1-4,8-11
1 Thessalonians 5.16-24
John 1.1-18

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (Hark the Herald)

CONCLUSION

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path, and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

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 thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Dayspring, from on
high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Adonai, Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Peterborough Cathedral Choir
Recorded live at Peterborough
Cathedral, Autumn 2020

Director of Music: Tansy Castledine
Organist: Christopher Strange
Recording technicians: Chris Pallister
of Service-AV, and Eugene Chan

www.peterborough-cathedral.org.uk

Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.”
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th’ angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem.”
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King!

Christ, by highest heaven adored:
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of the favoured one.
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail, th’incarnate Deity:
Pleased, as man, with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King!

Hail! the heaven-born
Prince of peace!
Hail! the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings
Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die:
Born to raise the son of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
“Glory to the new-born King !”

Sermon for 13th December 2020
Dawn Airey

John 1:1-18 - Family lines!

I want to think a little bit about family lines this morning. What family line do you identify with? Now for some people that will conjure up a nice feeling and for others it might feel the opposite, we'll come back to that at the end.

I wonder if you've seen that programme 'who do you think you are' where different celebrities explore their ancestry. I'm really interested in it, I'd love to know a bit more about my family line going back beyond my Grandparents generation.

In the gospels of Matthew and Luke we're familiar with what it tells us about the family line of Jesus, there's those long genealogies in Matthew 1 & Luke 3, a list of Jesus' ancestors..... and those genealogies point to the long shadow that lies behind the person and ministry of Jesus and which led to his birth. What I hadn't really noticed before, although it's kind of obvious, is that actually John 1 is also a genealogy of Jesus, but of a different kind. In Matthew and Luke's genealogy's we get the *human* story but the genealogy recorded in John, is the *divine* story, a story that stretches back beyond even the dawn of time itself. This has huge implications for you and me..... When I was training at Ridley College we had to learn some Greek. It was a little tedious if I'm honest and languages were never my forte! This particular passage, John 1, we had to learn in Greek. And in my first month or two of being here a Jehovah's Witness, a school mum, visibly shook as she gave me the Jehovah Witnesses version of John 1. And I remember thinking how grateful I was that I had had to learn this passage in its original language because of the insights it gave us and therefore the confidence with which I could answer her and give an account of the hope I have in Jesus.

So what is the divine story? v1 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' The 'in the beginning was the word' is a reference back to Genesis 1:1 you may remember

Genesis starts with 'In the beginning...'. The Hebrew phrase used is actually a bit clunky and not what might be expected, it actually says 'in beginning'. Now there are reasons for that but the point is that the Gospel writers have used the same clunky phrase as that used in Genesis (albeit a Greek translation from the Hebrew) to make it clear they are talking about the same thing - the beginning of all things, the beginning of all time, the beginning of all creation. So who is at the beginning of all things - it's the 'word'. And 'the word' is Jesus, nothing contentious about that. However, in the last bit 'the word was God', the Jehovah Witnesses interpret that as Jesus was a God. The original greek translation doesn't say that. It says.... Jesus..... **was**..... God.

That's so important, and Jesus's much older cousin John the baptist in this passage recognises the significance. He essentially says this one that is born after me, is actually ranked ahead of me - is so much more important than me - because actually he was here before me. How can someone born after you exist before you?! Well only if they are God! That's why we call Jesus's coming the incarnation because Jesus wasn't created like any other baby is created but was incarnated, he pre-existed, God himself put on flesh (in the person of Jesus) and came Himself to us, He didn't send someone else to do it. In the message version of v 14 it says, God turned up in the neighbourhood. Dai Wooldridge in the video said God 'came to the front line'.

And the soul reason is in v12 which says 'so that all who receive him (Jesus), who believe in his name (the name of Jesus that is), he gives the power to become a child of God'. I love this, this passage tells us that before the world was actually created there was already a plan in motion for God to come to the earth in the form of Jesus, for you and me. And so Jesus wasn't some poor soul who was made to be part of God's plan to save humanity, but He was there at the very beginning, completely complicit with, in agreement with this plan. A plan in which our sins are forgiven, giving us free access to our heavenly Father, a plan that would change everything. The separation between humans because of COVID-19 is a very visual picture for us of how the whole of

humanity stands in relation to God, and while we're on the brink of a vaccine being distributed, I love Dai Wooldridge's insight - that Jesus is THE ultimate vaccine, not from a deadly virus that separates humanity, but a vaccine that, should we accept it, means we don't need to be separated from God. This is the amazing story of Christmas. And because it's a plan that involves God's adoption of us, it makes a difference to us in at least two ways:

i) Firstly, we get to join the divine family line of Jesus. Regardless of our human ancestry - when we become Christians, we supernaturally become part of His divine story. Regardless of what or who is in our human blood line, all of that pales into relative insignificance compared now to the divine line we are knitted into. And that changes everything....Some of us will have a great human heritage that we're proud to be part of, but many of us may feel much more mixed than that. In my own heritage there is extreme anger, abuse and even manslaughter of a child. A very good friend of mine, because of the circumstances in which they were conceived and the subsequent abuse in their growing up years, felt they were never meant to be born and have struggled with shame attached to their family line. The moment we accept Jesus into our lives we join the divine family line of Jesus which trumps everything else.

ii) And secondly, because it's a plan that involves God's adoption of us, we get to join the family business. Because we are supernaturally part of His divine story, made available to us is His life changing & life giving power. This pre-existent Jesus, with the Father, at the beginning of time caused creation to explode all over the place, so wherever there is the presence of Jesus new forms of life spring into being, things have to change. And so much of the rest of John's gospel talks of Jesus miracles as signs, signs that point us to Jesus that says look, in His presence, water is turned into wine, the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, people are raised from the dead.

Now that's the sort of family line I want to belong to. That's the family line that as Christians we do belong to!

This genealogy of Jesus in John 1 tells us about the divine story, the divine line of Jesus, that we get to be knitted into the moment we accept Him into our lives. Our human heritage no longer defines us, whether it's a good or murky human line, and we get to take on our role in the divine family business, bringing the presence of Jesus wherever we are - that changes everything.