

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

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Welcome

Song: From life's beginning
to all eternity,
there is a song to be sung;
in deepest oceans,
across the galaxies,
in every nation and tongue.

*Let praise resound,
let praise resound, all around.
Creation, sing with one voice
to the glory of the Maker of all things:
let praise resound.*

Come, every creature
alive at his command,
join the eternal refrain.
Sing, joyful mountains,
you rivers, clap your hands;
all nature, breathe out his name.

Sing together:
holy, holy, holy is the Lord.
Glory to the one who lives
and reigns for evermore:
(repeat)
let praise resound.

So join the anthem,
let every voice be heard,
come lift your praises up high
as songs of worship
ring out across the earth,
as heaven sings in reply.

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Song: Forever
Give thanks to the Lord our God and King
His love endures forever
For He is good, He is above all things
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise

With a mighty hand and outstretched arm
His love endures forever
For the life that's been reborn
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise [2x]

Forever God is faithful
Forever God is strong
Forever God is with us
Forever

From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever
And by the grace of God we will carry on
His love endures forever
Sing praise, sing praise [2x]

Apostles Creed

ALL: We believe in God,

(Point up)

the Father

(Cross two fingers from both hands)

almighty,

(Raise two fists)

who sent

(Point a finger)

Jesus

(Touch each palm)

into

(praying hands)

the world.

(raise hands to side)

He came as a baby

(rock a baby)

Born of the holy spirit

Was crucified,

(Lift arms to side)

died

(Drop head)

And was buried.

(Curl up)

On the third day

(Hold 3 fingers up)

He rose again from the dead

(Raise arm up)

He ascended into heaven

(Lift both arms above head)

Where he prays for us continually.

(Praying hands)

Praise the lord

(Lift hands up high)

Halleluia!

Video: It begins – Bible society

Reading: Matthew 1.18-24 by Elijah

¹⁸This was how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they were married, she found out that she was going to have a baby by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately. ²⁰While he was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, descendant of David, do not be afraid to take Mary to be your wife. For it is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived. ²¹She will have a son, and you will name him Jesus—because he will save his people from their sins.”

²²Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, ²³“A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel” (which means, “God is with us”).²⁴ So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to.

Joseph - liturgy by Bob Hartman

All night, Joseph tossed.
All night Joseph turned.
He just couldn't sleep.
He'd only just learned

That Mary was pregnant.
What's more, she'd confirmed
That the baby she bore
was not his.

She'd told him this tale:
an angelic visit,
A son to be born
by God's Holy Spirit.
The more she went on,
the less he believed it.
He wanted to break their engagement.

But just as sleep came, that angel appeared.
'Don't worry,' he said,
'there's nothing to fear.'

I know that you're troubled,
so you need to hear
That Mary is telling the truth.

“The baby she bears
is God's holy son.
Call his name Jesus,
for he is the one

God promised to send to save everyone.
Immanuel, God is with us!

“He's the answer to all
that the prophets have said.
So keep your engagement.
Be glad and wed.’

And when Joseph woke up,
that's just what he did.
He took Mary to be his wife.

Joseph don't worry,
Joseph don't weep.

Lay down your head and go back to sleep.

Mary's been faithful.
Her love's strong and deep.
And her baby is God's own son.

Song: One still night, Mary awoke
Stirred by an angel, she trembled as he spoke
One small child would soon be born
The King of kings will wear a crown of
thorns

*"Glory to God," the angels sang
"Immanuel was born for you this day
Peace on earth, good will toward men
Immanuel has come to Bethlehem
Immanuel has come to Bethlehem"*

One still night, while Joseph dreamed
He saw a vision within his troubled sleep
One small child, his bride would give
Deliverer delivered to save us from our sin

And to His kingdom there'll be no end
And to His kingdom there'll be no end
And to His kingdom there'll be no end

One still night, a light was shown
That all the darkness could never overcome

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Sermon : Loving mercy

I read a church growth book once that recommended that churches have a 5 minute break in the middle of the service for all the men to get up and run around and do press ups. Apparently, this would make church more appealing to men. I have my doubts.

But here in Matthew we see Joseph very concerned about doing something, about being active, about doing what is right. Joseph has realised Mary is pregnant. He knows it wasn't him. He knows how babies are made, he knows Mary has broken her betrothal to him, and he is looking to do what is right. I imagine he might have yelled at God about it. I imagine Mary and he might have had cross words.

Joseph is hunting around for wisdom. Maybe he has asked his old mate what to do down the pub? Maybe he has asked a wise man in the square 'if you had a friend...'. Joseph finds his answer of what to do in the law. Presumably he believes Mary has been unfaithful, and is either lying, delusional or maybe naive. And yet he cares for her, he loves her. They are betrothed, so they are almost married. So he looks to the law for what is right. Deuteronomy 22 recommended if a betrothed young woman and man have an affair, they should be stoned to death at the town gate. In reality – thankfully this kind of practice didn't happen much, but divorce was possible. Divorce in a small town, where everyone knows everyone and everything they do, was a public event. Divorce was public and shameful. Joseph finds himself between a rock and a hard place. He does not want to shame Mary in public because he loves her, and yet he knows that baby is not his.

Jewish law like our law is often formed by real cases. Each rabbi of each town could dispense with a civil law. Some Rabbis allowed divorce for adultery, some allowed divorce for burning a meal. But the important thing for Joseph was that divorce was private, two witnesses, signature and maybe at least he could move on.

Joseph finds himself at a crossroads in his life, he doesn't know which way he should turn, but he wants to do what is right. In matters

of the heart, what is right or wrong can be impossible to tell. He settles on divorce before his marriage had even begun. How empty he must have felt.

Did you know for every empty feeling person there is an angel waiting to attend to them? God is always seeking out those who are spinning round on the spot, always trying to catch the eye of a rabbit in the headlights, always reaching out to hold the hand of those who cannot look at the future in confidence.

God understands that some situations are impossible, but he is always trying to remind us, even if it takes an angel in a dream, do not be afraid. Do not be afraid. I am with you. In Joseph we see a man who wants to do what is right but know understands to love mercy more.

Sometimes people do stuff that seems wrong, deeply wrong to us, but we must love mercy more. Sometimes people seem to be lying to our very faces, but we must love mercy more. Hosea 6.6 says God desires mercy not sacrifice.

When we are faced with someone who seems to have wronged us, who seems to have been a traitor, who seems to have betrayed our very name – may we seek mercy. For we only see in part, we only ever see half the story. The other half we must trust God with.

Know this today, for every truly testing decision. God is with you. For every situation where your limit of right and wrong is brought to the limit – God is with you, and know this – God loves mercy more too. God sent his son, and his name was Jesus. His name means he will save, his name means mercy.

Joseph led by God's angelic messenger to him had confidence in the God of mercy and grace. As each of us receive God's mercy may

our hope likewise be in the God of mercy love and grace in each and every trial.

Song: 1 All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
give my praise to the Fountain of delights;
for in my helplessness You heard my cry
and waves of mercy poured down on my life.

2 I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails,
of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the way, the truth, the life.
Star of the morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the risen One, heaven's champion,
and You reign, You reign over all!*

3 I long to be where the praise is never ending,
yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,
where countless worshippers will share one song,
and cries of 'Worthy!' will honour the Lamb!
Beautiful Saviour . . .

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Intercession

Song:
How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke your name into the night
Then through the darkness
Your loving kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul

The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless
grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The king of kings calls me His own
Beautiful savior, I'm yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope

*Hallelujah, praise the one who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope*

Then came the morning that sealed the
promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the roaring lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me

Blessing