

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

18 December 2022

Welcome

Advent Candle

Carol: 1 O come, O come, Immanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.

2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who ordered all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show
and teach us in its ways to go. Refrain

3 O come, O come, great Lord of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain

4 O come, O Branch of Jesse's stem,
unto your own and rescue them!
From depths of hell your people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave. Refrain

5 O come, O Key of David, come
and open wide our heavenly home.
Make safe for us the heavenward road
and bar the way to death's abode. Refrain

6 O come, O Bright and Morning Star,
and bring us comfort from afar!
Dispel the shadows of the night
and turn our darkness into light. Refrain

7 O come, O King of nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease
and be yourself our King of Peace. Refrain

Reading: Isaiah 7.10-17

¹⁰The Lord sent another message to
Ahaz: ¹¹“Ask the Lord your God to give you
a sign. It can be from deep in the world of
the dead or from high up in heaven.”

¹²Ahaz answered, “I will not ask for a sign. I
refuse to put the Lord to the test.”

¹³To that Isaiah replied, “Listen, now,
descendants of King David. It's bad enough
for you to wear out the patience of people—
do you have to wear out God's patience
too? ¹⁴Well then, the Lord himself will give
you a sign: a young woman^[b] who is
pregnant will have a son and will name him
'Immanuel.'^[c]¹⁵ By the time he is old enough
to make his own decisions, people will be
drinking milk and eating honey.^[d] ¹⁶Even
before that time comes, the lands of those
two kings who terrify you will be deserted.

¹⁷“The Lord is going to bring on you, on
your people, and on the whole royal family,
days of trouble worse than any that have
come since the kingdom of Israel separated
from Judah—he is going to bring the king of
Assyria.

Carol: O holy night, the stars are brightly
shining,
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious
morn.
Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was
born!

VERSE 2

Humbly He lay, Creator come as creature,
Born on the floor of a hay-scattered stall.
True Son of God, yet bearing human
feature,
He entered earth to reverse Adam's fall.
In towering grace, He laid aside His glory,
And in our place, was sacrificed for sin.
Fall on your knees! O hear the gospel story!
O night divine, O night when Christ was
born!

VERSE 3

Come then to Him Who lies within the
manger,
With joyful shepherds, proclaim Him as
Lord.
Let not the Promised Son remain a stranger;
In reverent worship, make Christ your
Adored.
Eternal life is theirs who would receive
Him;
With grace and peace, their lives He will
adorn.
Fall on your knees! Receive the Gift of
heaven!
O night divine, O night when Christ was
born
O night, O holy night when Christ was
born

Reading: Matthew 1.18-23

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").

All age Apostles' creed

Song: Born unto us this day a Saviour
Gifted from heaven to a manger
The hope of the world
A light for all mankind
All of the earth rejoice

It's Christmas time

So lift up your voice and sing out His praise

It's Christmas

Born is the King, rejoice in the day

It's Christmas

Make a joyful sound

It's Christmas

Let His praise resound

It's Christmas

Good will to all the earth
And peace divine
All of the earth rejoice
It's Christmas time
It's Christmas time

Sermon: O Immanuel – a sign for us

I have a box in our house that is full of presents to wrap, presents that have arrived (thankfully) but are not ready to be wrapped, not ready to be sent or need to wait to be taken to various people we'll see over Christmas. Do you have a similar box? It literally is an advent box. The presents exist but haven't been wrapped, given or unwrapped.

In the bible we see time a bit like the presents in a box, there is a time in the bible when a

prophecy is given and may be understood at the time. But then there is a second time, the time that is to come. Or to put it another way, the gifts in the box exist, but are only truly become gifts when given.

In Isaiah 7 we have heard the unfamiliar story about King Ahaz, and yet it includes one verse that the Christian church knows very well –

V14 ‘The Lord will give you a sign: a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Immanuel.’

So in Isaiah 7 we have a story that would fit in advent box. It’s a story about the present reality of Ahaz and then also means something special for Matthew the gospel writer when Jesus is born. This story is for Ahaz, for Matthew and for us a story of the presence of God as a sign of his love and power for us all.

Let’s think a little about King Ahaz. Ahaz is the king of Judah. Judah is one of the tribes of Israel. The kingdom of Israel (different to the tribes) has been captured by the Assyrians. The Assyrian empire is growing all around Judah. They conquered Syria in 732 BC, Israel in 722BC and where we pick up the story in chapter 7 – Ahaz is still trying to do a deal with Assyrians to prevent invasion. What Ahaz doesn’t know is that Syria and Israel are working with the Assyrians to get rid of Ahaz and put a puppet king in his place. He cannot see the reality of his situation. He cannot see that Judah is a sitting duck, and has no real power left. Or maybe he half realises it, because Isaiah goes to meet him checking the water supplies for Jerusalem if there is a siege. Isaiah’s prophecy to him is God’s word to Ahaz, God says to Ahaz – don’t try to form an alliance with the Assyrians, trust me instead. Ahaz refuses.

God still tries to help Ahaz through Isaiah. Isaiah says to Ahaz: ask God for a sign. Ahaz will not. Why? Because Ahaz was a silly king, who wouldn't listen to Isaiah. He wanted a sign to lead him but he didn't want to ask God. We all want signs ... But we often want them on our terms, don't we? I knew that job wasn't for me because I missed the train... Is that a sign about the job, or is it a sign about your alarm clock?

So God sends Ahaz a sign whether he likes it or not. The sign is a baby called Immanuel, but it is more like a clock. A baby alarm clock if you will. For the sign to Ahaz is that by the time a baby is born and is old enough to make decisions, the kings who Ahaz feared will be gone. A sign is supposed to be seen. After the premises meeting last week, I made a sign saying : shut the door, and double check its locked for our side door. We decided to make a sign, because we need it to be seen, because we need the door properly locked. The sign of Immanuel for Ahaz is that time is up, his day is drawing near as king. For God is at work in the life of Judah, but he is at work in the foreign forces all around. God is using the Assyrians to bring change.

For Ahaz, Immanuel meant God is with us. But he refuses to listen to God. He refuses to hear what Isaiah says and fails to recognise God’s presence close by.

The sign Ahaz should have seen and acted differently because of seeing the sign, was ignored. His efforts to make peace with the Assyrians were lost, for in such battles enemies lie. And Judah was captured by the Assyrians in 701BC.

So why does Matthew then pull this one verse out for Jesus? The Christian understanding of this verse connects to Isaiah 9 – for unto us a child is born, he will be our ruler, and will be called wonderful counsellor, mighty God, eternal father and prince of peace. He will

rule as King David's successor from now until the end of time.

For Matthew, he sees in the birth of Jesus a second fulfilment of Immanuel. For Matthew believes that in Jesus, all can know God is with us. For in Jesus, the divine becomes flesh, God enters our world in a way that is nearly impossible for us to understand. It is only possible to understand it in faith.

Matthew shows us the signs of angels, stars and kings to the birth of Jesus as a sign of hope. As a sign of God's presence in the world now. Did you see that Matthew records the birth of Jesus and says it fulfils Isaiah's prophecy for a baby to be called Immanuel? Did you also see that Jesus isn't given the name Immanuel? He is given the name Jesus. What I think we see here is a big shift from the Old Testament to the New, from Hebrew to Greek and from Jewish to Christian thought and theology.

For Ahaz, God is with him, and trying to give him a sign.

For Mary, God is with her, and trying to give her signs so she could give birth to Jesus.

But for Matthew, and for all of us, Jesus is born. God is with us in the flesh. This name is not just a name, it's a reality. Jesus really existed, he really walked on this earth, he was really with us.

How was your name chosen? Maybe you're named after a bible character? Maybe you're named after the place where you were born? Or maybe it's just a name your parents heard on the radio one day.

The name of God is different not just a name. The name of God is who he is, it's his identity. Know the name of God in our heads and our hearts, and know God.

The reality was Jesus was with us, born to Mary and Joseph. And he is still with us today, Jesus lives in our hearts through the Holy Spirit today.

But the name of Jesus means something else, it means the one who saves. A saviour born to us, God with us.

Ahaz needed a saviour. And the people of God needed a saviour after all their lands were captured, all the people deported and only a remnant remained. The people of God were in tatters and lived like that for hundreds of years waiting for hope to come.

O come o come Emmanuel. God is with us, and his name is Jesus, the one who saves.

In this season of Advent we remember the God who came to us, we worship God with us but we also look to the cross, to the God who saves who in the ultimate sign breaks the cycle of death. We look further forward too. We look to the future just like the people of God did. We look with hope to when Jesus will come again. For the signs we have learnt from God are that God is always with us, always looking to save us. How do God's signs change our behaviour? Do they help us to trust in his providence and grace? God has a gift for all us, it's not waiting to be wrapped it's waiting for us to accept and it is his presence with us, to save, to heal and to guide. Amen.

Song: Heaven has come to us

Unto us from on high
Reaching down into the deepest night
To the world hope has come
In the dark the Light of Life has dawned

*What a myst'ry, oh what love
Oh how can it be that heaven has come to us*

Unto us meek and mild
God eternal born a helpless child
Set aside heaven's throne
Veiled in weakness came unto His own

*What a myst'ry, oh what love
Oh how can it be that heaven has come
What a myst'ry, oh what love
Oh how can it be that heaven has come to us*

Unto us grace has come
Here to seek and bring the sinner home
Lived to die, rose to reign
Son of Man the Lamb for sinners slain

*What a myst'ry, oh what love
Oh how can it be that heaven has come
What a myst'ry, oh what love
Oh how can it be that heaven has come to us
Heaven has come to us
Heaven has come to us*

Communion

Prayers for the world

Song: From the squalor of borrowed
From the squalor of a borrowed stable,
By the Spirit and a virgin's faith;
To the anguish and the shame of scandal
Came the Saviour of the human race.
But the skies were filled with the praise of
heaven,
Shepherds listen as the angels tell
Of the Gift of God come down to man
At the dawning of Immanuel.

King of heaven now the Friend of sinners,
Humble servant in the Father's hands,
Filled with power and the Holy Spirit,
Filled with mercy for the broken man.
Yes, He walked my road and He felt my
pain,
Joys and sorrows that I know so well;
Yet His righteous steps give me hope
again –
I will follow my Immanuel.

Through the kisses of a friend's betrayal,
He was lifted on a cruel cross;
He was punished for a world's
transgressions,
He was suffering to save the lost.
He fights for breath, He fights for me,
Loosing sinners from the claims of hell;
And with a shout our souls are free –
Death defeated by Immanuel.

Now He's standing in the place of honour,
Crowned with glory on the highest throne,
Interceding for His own beloved
Till His Father calls to bring them home!
Then the skies will part as the trumpet
sounds
Hope of heaven or the fear of hell;
But the Bride will run to her Lover's arms,
Giving glory to Immanuel!

Blessing