

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

25 December 2021

Welcome

Song: Joy to the World

Worldly God,
your Word in season
enters our neighbourhood
bringing grace and truth:
Glory to God in the highest heaven
and on earth peace to all people

Beckoning God,
your child in a manger invites us
to lean close and bow down:
Glory to God in the highest heaven
and on earth peace to all people

Unbounded God,
your angel brings good news
and great joy
to all on the margins:
Glory to God in the highest heaven
and on earth peace to all people

Intimate God,
your power seeds hope for the lowly
and judgement for the proud:
Glory to God in the highest heaven
and on earth peace to all people

Saviour God,
your Spirit gifts one like us,
one of us, one with us,
to save us from ourselves:
Glory to God in the highest heaven
and on earth peace to all people. Amen

Song: Angels, from the realms of glory

Reading: Luke 2.1-20 by Jane Gibbins

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^{al} Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this

thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Song: While shepherds watched

Sermon

I was delighted this week to learn of a haul of hidden treasure has been discovered under the sea on a shipwreck. It was found by a team of divers near the old port of Caesarea, which is along the coast up from Tel Aviv. In the treasure there were lots of coins, artifacts and one incredible Roman ring. It's made of gold, solid gold and has an oval blue stone that has a marble effect in the polished gem. It's a beautiful ring completely intact from 2000 years ago but what is super special about it is the carving made into the rich deep blue stone. Unfortunately, all the images of the ring are owned by Reuters, so here is a drawing that I made of the carving from the ring. Please do not laugh.

What does the image show, again please do not laugh? A boy or young man carrying something on his shoulders, two sheep. This image is important as it was a symbol dear to the heart of the early church: the good shepherd.



Shepherds were unkindly thought of in biblical times mainly because they worked out in the fields and couldn't come to temple regularly. If you thought someone smelt bad – you said they were a shepherd, if your bag disappeared from your donkey – you would accuse the local shepherds of nicking it. If you wanted a witness in a court case, you would not call a shepherd. And yet it was to the shepherds that the angel spoke, the most beautiful and lifechanging words ever to be spoken: this day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign: a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.

Luke mentions the manger three times in v7,12,16. A manger normally is used for animals to feed from – the name from the French manger to eat. The reason Luke mentions the manger so much, is because it is so odd. Odd for a baby to be in a manger and not a cot. And it serves as a sign; almost as a signpost for the shepherds to be able to find the baby. The angels do not give a full address and postcode for the shepherds to put into their satnav, the manger helps them find the right baby born in Bethlehem. But more so the manger is a sign to the shepherds that what the angel has said is true. It's not remarkable that a baby is born in poverty in small rural village.

What is special is a baby announced by an angel with proof that the shepherds can spot, see and touch. If the manger is real, if Jesus really was in an animal feeding trough, then maybe hope against hope this baby is the Christ. Christ that the shepherds and all the people of God have been waiting for, Christ who is the Messiah, the anointed son of God come to save them from those lording it over God's people and land like Emperor Augustus, Herod and all the others. Maybe hope against hope this baby is the new King from David's town – the shepherd boy become King. Maybe the promise of God

that David's kingdom would never end was true. Maybe God was doing something new, for baby's are not normally found in mangers. Maybe God was speaking to different people, for God's angelic host giving God's word do not normally speak to shepherds. Priest, prophets, kings - yes but Shepherds?

Out of the fields Samuel anointed David as king who ruled with honour and greatness. In the psalms we learn that God is our shepherd, that he is with us as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. As a man Jesus said: I am the Good Shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. Listen to my voice.

Christ the Lord is here the angels said, and the shepherds believed. The Holy Spirit reminds our hearts : Christ the Lord is here to each of us who dare to believe in the power, grace and might of the king of Kings. Christ the Lord who laid in a manger was a sign that God had not forgotten his people but had come so very close to us. May the manger in every nativity set or scene you will see today be a sign to you too that Christ is the Lord. May the angel's words grant us comfort and great peace that Christ is Lord of our hearts, daily lives, work trouble and family grief. May the shepherds remind us of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for us and leads us home to heaven. May we treasure his extravagant love for us as Christ the Lord on this Christmas morn. Amen.

Song: From the squalor of a borrowed stable

Communion (liturgy Hillcrest.org)

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
For to us a child is born
to us a Son is given.

His name will be called
Wonderful counsellor, mighty God, **the**

**everlasting Father,
the Prince of Peace.**

Glory to God in the highest
and peace to his people on earth.
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
he has come to his people
and set them free.

Light has sprung up for the righteous
and joyful gladness for those who are true-
hearted.

Glory to God in the highest
and peace to his people on earth.

The Word of life which was from the
beginning
Lord we proclaim to you.

The darkness is passing away
and the true light is already shining;
the Word of life which was from the
beginning.
That which we heard, which we saw with
our eyes, and touched with our own hands,
Lord we proclaim to you.

For our fellowship is with the Father,
and with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
The Word of life which was from the
beginning
Lord we proclaim to you.

See what love the Father has given us
that we should be called the children of
God.

You are my sons and daughters:
this day I have begotten you.
See what love the Father has given us.

As many as received him,
to them he gave power to become the
children of God.
See what love the Father has given us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
**See what love the Father has given us
that we should be called the children of
God.**

Let us bless the living God:
He was born of the Virgin Mary,
revealed in his glory,
worshipped by the angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed in throughout the world,
exalted to the highest heavens.
Blessed be God, our strength and our
salvation,
now and for ever. Amen.

The Word became flesh
and dwelt among us,
full of grace and truth.
And we have seen his glory,
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to
the Holy Spirit.

Intercession for the World

Christ born for us,
Son of God given for us:
help us to know you,
to worship and to serve you ...
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Wonderful counsellor,
you order all things with your wisdom:
help the Church to reveal the mystery of
your love and fill her with the Spirit of truth
...
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Mighty God,
the government is on your shoulders:
guide the leaders of the nations
and bring in your kingdom of justice and
righteousness ... Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Everlasting Father,
you call us to live together in unity:
protect by your mercy all your children,
bless our families and renew our
communities ... Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Prince of peace,
you bring reconciliation through the cross:
by your healing power give to all who suffer
... your gift of wholeness and peace.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Confession

God our Father,
you sent your Son full of grace and truth:
forgive our failure to receive him.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Jesus our Saviour,
you were born in poverty and laid in a
manger: forgive our greed and rejection of
your ways. Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Spirit of Love,
your servant Mary responded joyfully to
your call: forgive the hardness of our hearts.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Breaking of the Bread

We break the bread of life,
and that life is the light of the world.
**God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bringing us into his light and life.**

Christ is the true bread which has come
down from heaven.

The Cup

We take the cup of the new covenant in his
blood

**God here among us,
light in the midst of us,
bringing us into his light and life.**

The Blessing

May the Father,
who has loved the eternal Son
from before the foundation of the world,
shed that love upon you his children. **Amen.**

May Christ,
who by his incarnation gathered into one
things earthly and heavenly,
fill you with joy and peace.
Amen.

May the Holy Spirit,
by whose overshadowing Mary became the
God-bearer, give you grace to carry the good
news of Christ.
Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Go in peace. Proclaim the Word made flesh.
Glory, thanks and praise to God.

Song: O come, all ye faithful, joyful and
triumphant!