

Christ Church New Southgate & Friern Barnet

5 December 2021

Welcome

Across the lands
You're the word of God the Father
From before the world began.
Ev'ry star and ev'ry planet
Has been fashioned by Your hand.
All creation holds together
By the power of Your voice.
Let the skies declare Your glory;
Let the land and seas rejoice!

*You're the Author of creation;
You're the Lord of ev'ry man;
And Your cry of love rings out across the lands.*

Yet You left the gaze of angels,
Came to seek and save the lost,
And exchanged the joy of heaven
For the anguish of a cross.
With a prayer You fed the hungry;
With a word You calmed the sea;
Yet how silently You suffered
That the guilty may go free!

With a shout You rose victorious,
Wresting vict'ry from the grave,
And ascended into heaven,
Leading captives in Your way.
Now You stand before the Father,
Interceding for Your own;
From each tribe and tongue and nation,
You are leading sinners home!

Song: We wait with great expectancy
to see your Kingdom come.
We trust your word to be fulfilled
and pray your will be done.
So in our world of ache and loss
we're calling out, as one:

*Come Lord Jesus,
we hunger and we yearn
for your return.
Come Lord Jesus,
oh we pray for your return.*

You came to us so long ago
and you will come again.
We long for heaven on the earth,
an end to grief and pain.
Lord, may our lives anticipate
and usher in your reign.

So lead us in your patience, Lord,
and help us match your pace,
to walk the straight and narrow road
in rhythms of your grace,
and may this Advent way of life
all hurriedness replace.

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Reading: Psalm 33

¹ Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

⁴ **For the word of the Lord is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.**

⁵ The Lord loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

⁶ **By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.**

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;^[a]
he puts the deep into storehouses.

⁸ **Let all the earth fear the Lord;
let all the people of the world revere him.**

⁹ **For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.**

Reading: Luke 3.1-6

3 It was the fifteenth year of the rule of
Emperor Tiberius; Pontius Pilate was

governor of Judea, Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip was ruler of the territory of Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler of Abilene, ² and Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests. At that time the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. ³ So John went throughout the whole territory of the Jordan River, preaching, “Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins.” ⁴ As it is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

“Someone is shouting in the desert:
 ‘Get the road ready for the Lord;
 make a straight path for him to travel!
⁵ Every valley must be filled up,
 every hill and mountain leveled off.
 The winding roads must be made straight,
 and the rough paths made smooth.
⁶ The whole human race will see God's salvation!”

All age quiz: Whose word?

Try and guess who said the following words from the bible.

‘Let there be light’ Genesis 1.3
 God Abraham Moses

And you, [John], will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways. Luke 1.76
 Isaiah Zechariah Mary

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; Luke 1.52
 Joseph Elizabeth Mary

‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Luke 1.42
 Elizabeth Gabriel Joseph

“Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.” Luke 3.4
 Isaiah Mark Mary

‘I am the light of the world’. John 8.12
 Jonah Jesus Joseph

Lord’s prayer active

Song: Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
 Nothing's too little, little for his care
 Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
 Nothing's too idly, widdly for his care
 Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
 Nothing's too incy-wincy for his care
 Nothing's too big, big, big for his power
 Nothing's too teeny-weeny for his care

He is God of the big, God of the little
 God of the stuff somewhere in the middle
 The King of moving mountains
 Love's you more than you will ever know

Sermon: At that time the word came



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Herod Antipas
 Weglinde, CC0, via
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Emperor Tiberius made it his business to deport the Jewish population with accusation of treason and sedition. His final ruling years were marked with pure terror. Pontius Pilate was not always swayed by the crowds as in the gospel account of Jesus’ trial but as Philo (Leg.Gai) writes, he administered his region with ‘bribery, insults, robberies, injuries,

execution without trial and a savage ferocity'. As prefect of the Roman province, he added taxes to temple worship for the emperor and so failing to respect Jewish faith and practice. Annas and Caiaphas would have exercised 'unrivalled power and privilege among the Jewish people' (Green, 1997).

At the time John the Baptist appears here in Luke 3, the people of God are living under oppression, tyranny and fundamental trials to their faith and very existence. Luke locates his gospel in the geo-political climate of his time. He does not hold the view that the story of God happens outside of politics, outside of immigration and pain and suffering. He sets the whole story of God coming to the world in it. At that time, life was not a rural idyll where anyone could relax and savour a pomegranate and fig lunch. Life was demanding and treacherous. The people of God lived under occupation and constant threat to their lives. At that time the people were desperate for change, desperate for hope. At that time many people couldn't live in safety in their own lands.

In our time, right now, there are countries around the world where people cannot live in safety in their own lands. There are countries all around the world where there is no power, no food, no fair administration. These countries are marked with corruption, violence and oppression. Some of us will know the pain of living in countries like this and finding no option but having to leave. All of us will have heard that refugees are dying in the channel trying to reach the UK. All of us should know that the 27 people who died last weekend so close to our shores, join with estimated 166 who have died or gone missing crossing the channel since 2014 according to the International Organization of Migration (IOM). We are living in difficult and testing times too.

In the season of Advent we are reminded of the darkness of the world. We wait in

darkness for the Lord to come. We wait in expectancy for light to enter our world, our world that is plagued with pain and suffering just as the world of Luke and John's was.

And yet into this darkness, into the oppression of all by men – v2. At that time the word of God came. The word of God is a bible term for when God speaks. The word comes to all the prophets: Samuel, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and now to John. The people of God ached for the word, they longed to hear from the word, for this was how they could hear God. It teaches us a fundamental truth about Christianity and about God. God does not leave us alone. God knows this world is a painful place. God knows that we do things to others that we would not do to ourselves. God knows that there is sickness in this world. God knows that there are child refugees seeking sanctuary because the word of God came.

Before the word came to lead and to guide. Before the word was to move into a different land or pray in a different way. When the word came to John, he started shouting: get ready for the Lord. The Lord is coming.

When the word came, to which John gets everyone ready for, the word came to say: I am with you. I am with you in your trials and struggles. The word of God is that God sees all of our political mess, he sees the great oppression of refugees and he does not like it. Here is a beautiful picture of the family of Jesus on a boat crossing some water by Tim Saunders a London artist. The word of God is placed right in the heart of pain, striving and desperation. Into this world, at this time the word of God came.



Tim Saunders

The word comes into that time and in our time, because the word is. In the beginning was the word. Through him all things were made. God spoke at the beginning of the world. He spoke and created the stars and the heavens. He spoke and trees sprouted from the earth. He spoke and life became abundant. He spoke and humanity began. At that time God's word created, he brought life. And the word brings life to John in the desert, to those listening to him, and to us today. The word does not leave us alone to suffer but joins us on each and every boat and enters into our suffering and shares it.

I wonder if you have a calendar function on your phone or computer? One of the helpful things that an electronic calendar does is to send you a notification. A little message appears at 30 minutes before, perhaps with a silly ringtone if you select that option too. A message will flash up before the meeting you are due to be at. Its function of course is to remind you that the meeting is coming. It reminds you to put your coat on and go, it reminds you to stop snoozing and get up, it reminds you to stop and change direction.

At that time the word came to John who said: There's a meeting coming on your schedule, it requires you to be ready. Wake up. Being ready for that meeting is a life of discipleship. It involves repenting. Each of us seeking God today need to honestly and truthfully recognise where there is sin in our life. Are we

ready to meet with God? Do we need to fill in some valley, or cut down a mountain? Do we need to stop doing something wrong and start doing something right? For the meeting with God is actually on everyone's calendar. And the notification is right now, this advent : are our lives in order? Are we ready to meet with the Lord?

At that time, the word came – and it came to tell of the Lord coming to this earth. At that time, the word spoke and showed us how to live even in a troubled world. At that time, the word spoke in the Spirit and equipped all of us with power.

So at this time, when the word has already come, when we know that the son of God came to this earth and lived and breathed among us.

At this time, when we know how to live for the Lord himself has taught us, will we listen for his word again? At this time when the Spirit is present with us in marvellous ways, will we listen? Will we listen, now for signs of his coming again? Will we listen for the word of God to come now?

May we use this time of Advent to get ready for meeting with God. May we turn from doing bad and seek to do what is right, for as we do we meet with our loving and forgiving God who understands our times and is still the God who comes to us. At this time, may the word of God come to us.

Song: Living bread in mercy broken,
Jesus' body for our need;
we give thanks as we receive it
for this bread is life indeed.

Cup of wine, the blood of Jesus,
poured out freely for our sin;
as we drink we know forgiveness
for this cup has grace within.

Loving saviour, bread of heaven,
here you meet us with your grace;
daily may we know your presence
and abide in you always.

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Communion

Intercession

Song: Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith

Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory
Teach us Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of pow'r that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for
us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory

Blessing

**May the words of my mouth
and this meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.
Psalm 19.14**