

13 December 2020, 11am
*Christ Church New Southgate &
Friern Barnet*

Please join with us at 11am to read this service together either in person, online or in printed form.

Each person in the church is assigned a deacon who will call you to see if you are alright in these times and to pray for you. Please feel free to call Ruth too if you wish – only happy to help! 020 8368 8157

Welcome

On this 3rd Advent Sunday, we continue with the ‘Engage’ worship series Ruth started at the beginning of Advent. The theme for today is Hope-filled expectations.

Prayer

Almighty God, gracious provider and giver of life, be at the centre of our worship today. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. As we await the celebration of your birth, like the people of long ago, our ancestors in faith, we, too, are in need of light, in need of direction, in need of your Word, to show us the way. Help us to recognize your kingdom and to hear your voice. Help us Lord, to focus on you.

Amen.

Psalm 126 New Living Translation

We read together the words in bold.
When the LORD brought back his exiles to Jerusalem,

All: it was like a dream!

We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy.

All: And the other nations said,
“What amazing things the LORD has done for them.”

Yes, the LORD has done amazing things for us!

What joy!

All: Restore our fortunes, LORD,

as streams renew the desert.

Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy.

All: They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

**Hymn MP 210: Hark the glad sound!
The Saviour comes**

- 1 Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long;
let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.
- 2 He comes, the prisoners to release
in Satan’s bondage held;
the chains of sin before Him break,
the iron fetters yield.
- 3 He comes to free the captive mind
where evil thoughts control;
and for the darkness of the blind,
gives light that makes them whole.
- 4 He comes the broken heart to bind,
the wounded soul to cure;
and with the treasures of His grace
to enrich the humble poor.
- 5 Our glad hosannas, Prince of peace,
Your welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven’s eternal arches ring
with Your beloved name.

Lighting of the Advent candle

LEADER: The third candle in our crown,
like John the Baptist, lights the way,
preparing for Jesus, coming soon,
in ancient times just like today.
Jesus, help us make way for you;

ALL: O come, O come Emmanuel.
In words and acts and in our lives,
O come, O come Emmanuel.

Prayer of confession

We give thanks, O God that you are unchanging and love us. We thank you for all your goodness to us. We confess that we often hesitate to speak or act when we see people being treated unjustly.

Forgive our uncaring attitudes. Forgive us for all the times when we have been happy to hear the gospel without truly living it. Forgive us for placing our hope in other than the Christ-child born in a stable. Our hope lies in the promise of your mercy. Heal, restore and bless us we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

May the God of hope and peace cleanse you. May our spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice then, and give thanks as we receive forgiveness and healing in Christ's name. **Amen.**

Prayer for our expectant hopes.

Jesus said whatever we ask for, believing, we will receive. He is interested in everything about us. Let us tell Him about our expectant hopes for our family, our friends and neighbours, our church, our country, and our world.

God hope and mercy, show us your wisdom that we may grow to accept your timing. Help us to be patient and gentle with ourselves as we wait for our hopes to be realised. Help us to see the long-term view when we are caught up in the frustration of waiting. This we ask in the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Bible Reading: 1. Matthew 11:2-5. When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?' 4 Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are

cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

All age talk

It is almost Christmas and the younger ones especially will be expecting to get the presents they really want. I remember when I was 8 years old. I really wanted a proper watch that tells the time. When I opened my present on Christmas day, I got a toy watch! I was truly disappointed. I did not get a proper watch until I was 18yrs old. Ten years later! I wonder what present you have received or something you longed for that didn't measure up to your expectations.

As Christmas is almost here I have put a present in this box. What do you reckon is in the box? Jewelry? Hold on to what you expect is in the box while I open it. Ahh. It's chocolate! Considering how shiny the box is, do you expect what is inside to be chocolate? I guess the answer for some of you will be 'No'.

Another person who did not get what he hoped for was John the Baptist. He expected Jesus Christ the Messiah to be warrior king who will save them from the harsh, ruling Romans and the dishonest temple priests and teachers. Instead Jesus turned out to be a peace loving King who healed all and taught about a new eternal Kingdom where everyone is equal, welcomed and loved by God the Father. John the Baptist's was so confused and disappointed that he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the expected one.

I don't know if the things you long for or the expectations you have will come true or not. The important thing is to try and be patient. To remain expectant of God's goodness to you because Jesus loves you deeply.

Prayer

Loving God, give us patience to endure and to not rush ahead, give us hope that your goodness will prevail. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Sermon

Prayer

Loving God, give us now a sense of your presence and enable us to open our hearts and minds to you. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The title of my sermon is Expectant Hope. Many will agree with me that 2020 has not turned out as expected. Some of the hopes many had for the year might not have materialised because of the Covid -19 pandemic. I wonder what you were expecting at the beginning of the year that had not materialised and you're beginning to lose the confidence it will ever happen. I also wonder if you got what you expected but it did not measure up to your expectations.

In the Matthew passage we read earlier, John the Baptist's expectation of what Jesus the Messiah, would be like and do was fading fast. He was not expecting a teacher and healer but more of a warrior King. A king who is the fulfilment of the God written in Isaiah 35:4 who had 'come with vengeance; with divine retribution to save them from the tyranny of the ruling Roman who taxed them to the bone. A Messiah who will get rid of the corrupt priests and teachers in charge of the temple who had put more burden on the people with their many man-made rules.

This peaceful, compassionate Jesus who healed all and taught about His new Kingdom where everyone is equal, loved and welcomed could not be the real McCoy after all. His proclamation of Jesus and testimony as the One too big for Him to tie the laces of his shoes felt like a joke. He had also probably forgotten or doubted if He heard right when God the Father declared 'Jesus is my beloved Son. Listen to Him' after he baptised Jesus in the River Jordan.

One can understand John the Baptist's doubt and confusion about expected Jesus. To

make matters worse, he was vulnerable and imprisoned by the horrible King Herod that Jesus was expected to get rid of. His disappointment in Jesus as the long expected Messiah was palpable. It was not surprising that he felt the need to send his disciples to ask Jesus, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'

Some of us probably feel like John the Baptist today, disappointed and disillusioned not just by the devastation of Covid-19 but also the injustice and sufferings we see around us or happening to us. We too are asking what Jesus is doing. Is Jesus with me as He promised? Why is He not answering my prayers or fulfilling my expectations? How long do I have to wait for my expectations to be realised?

Well, it is okay to ask such questions. There are many in the Bible who would have asked similar questions. Such as Abraham and Sarah who spent 25 years, longing for their promised son. Moses who waited 40 years, longing for his people to enter the Promised Land. David who endured 15 years, longing to take his rightful place as king. The key thing is to persevere. Not to lose hope. To remain expectant of change in your situation in God's good time. To have faith in God's grace and His love for you.

The sort of faith the Israelites of Psalm 126 had that their parched land will be healed and become fertile again. That those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. And those who go out weeping carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them soon.

This faith is an expectant one that whatever we are struggling with will eventually improve. The **faith** described in Hebrews 11 as 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

This Covid -19 rampage continues. No one knows when things will improve or how the numerous that have become unemployed since the pandemic will find new jobs but we should try to keep faith with Jesus.

This expectant hope that Jesus will keep building His Church is probably why many churches actively looked for innovative ways to spread the Good News when told to close to churches in order to reduce the spread of Covid -19. No one truly thought the closure and the available technology will actually make Churches more visible and accessible to many. Churches do not know the final outcome yet but simply obeyed Jesus command to keep spreading the Good News until He returns. To wait patiently and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near as encouraged in James. 4:8

Be patient. Jesus, whom we are looking forward to celebrating His first coming as a baby at Christmas is coming back a second time. On His second coming, He will judge the world and make all things new. We are also expectant of the eternal reward and Kingdom promised to all who remain faithful until the end.

While we patiently await the second coming of Jesus Christ, persevere in good works. Avoid grumbling. Develop a stronger relationship with Jesus. Read the Bible, pray and fellowship with other believers regularly. Share the Good News of Jesus as the Saviour of the world who deeply loves us and has redeemed all.

This year might not have gone as expected. Christmas may be less exuberant. The key thing is to keep faith and be expectant of peace joy and God's goodness because Jesus loves you deeply.

May the God of hope fill you now with **all joy and peace** this Christmas and for evermore. **Amen.**

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for your Word. Help us to remain expectant of your goodness to us. Grant us the wisdom and courage to share the good news of your Kingdom with all.

Amen

Prayer of intercession –

We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,
ALL: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

L: We look at our world, so desperately in need of you. Deserts spread, harvests fail and people thirst.

But you promise: *“The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.”*
[Is 35:1]

We bring to you those who suffer with droughts and famines, that you would provide for their needs. And we pray for those who work for environmental justice, who battle for a better stewardship of your creation. We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,

All: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

L: We look at our world, so desperately in need of you. Nations act selfishly, injustices deepen and people suffer with anxiety and depression.

But you promise to: *“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear...’”* [Is 35:3-4a]

We bring you those who suffer from fear and anxiety, that you would bring healing to their souls. And we pray for those who work to strengthen the fearful, the therapists, social workers, counsellors and pastors. We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,

All: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

L: We look at our world, so desperately in need of you. Illness cripples potential, causing pain and suffering.

But you promise: *“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.” [Is 35:5-6]*

We bring you those we know personally who are ill at this time, Peter and Ruby, that you will bring healing to their bodies. And we pray for those who work tirelessly to care for those in physical need: the personal assistants, the nurses, the doctors and the medical missionaries. We pray for Jane, Sue and Sherry who are bereaved. Grant them your peace, joy and comfort. We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,

All: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

Lord Jesus, we see in the gospels how you fulfil Isaiah’s prophecies, and we hunger for those promises to be complete. As we wait for your return, help us be your hands and feet on earth. We proclaim that Jesus, you have come,

All: and you will come again, help us work for the justice of your Kingdom.

In Jesus’ name,

All: Amen. As Jesus taught us we pray

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.**

Sending out prayer and benediction

ALL: Send us out, Lord,

LEADER: to have faith that the waiting seeds will bear fruit.

Send us out, Lord,

to trust you through our disappointments.

Send us out, Lord,

to take joy in the journey, rather than rush towards the destination.

Send us out, Lord,

to live with the tension of the now and the not yet.

Send us out, Lord,

to be patient and stand firm, because your coming is near. **Amen.**

And we say the grace together:

**May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,**

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with you all.

Now and evermore, Amen.

Links.

During the sermon for the children: ‘God story /Jesus’ <https://youtu.be/8u-ICIHAmKk>

Extra Hymn:

<https://youtu.be/gNuY6I4OtoE> - Christy Nockels -

The Thrill of Hope – Advent Hymn (Lyric video)