



Songs of the Saviour: Zechariah's Benedictus

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited
and redeemed his people." (Lk 1:68)*

Call to Worship

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!
Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!
Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!
Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!

**To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honour and glory and might
forever and ever. Amen!**

(1 Chr 16:8-11; Rev 5:12-13)

Let us pray.

**Almighty God, to you all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Psalm 96

Sing unto the Lord a new song,
Sing to Him, O all the earth!
Bless the name of God forever;
Sing salvation's wondrous worth.
Tell His glory to the nations;
Of His wonders, anthems raise.
He is Lord of all creation,
Great, and greatly to be praised.

Other gods fade as a vapor;
There is none beside the Lord.
In His dwelling, strength, and splendor,
God exalted and adored.
Give Him glory, all ye people;
Give Him glory due His name.
In His temple, as an off'ring,
All His pow'r and might proclaim.

Worship God in holy beauty;
Bow before His throne in fear.
Now proclaim among the nations
His dominion, ever near.
By His word, the earth was founded,
That it never may be moved;
In His word is justice grounded,
That He righteous may be proved.

Let the heavens shout, rejoicing,
And the earth in joy aflame;
Let the sea in thunder praise Him,
Field and forest now acclaim.
For the Lord, the Lord is coming;
Let the earth resound again!
To His people, He is coming
In His righteousness to reign!

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Confession and Assurance

Hear what God's word says:

"O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether." (Ps 139:1-4)

Have mercy on us, O God

**According to your unfailing love;
According to your great compassion.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
Therefore, let us confess our sins against God,
and against our neighbour,
first in silence and then aloud together.

Please kneel or remain seated.

Prayer of Confession

**Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy, blot out our transgressions.
Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin!
For we know our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us.
Against you, you only, have we sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
Hide your face from our sins, and blot out all our iniquities.
Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.
Cast us not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from us.
Restore to us the joy of your salvation, and uphold us with a willing spirit.
For you will not delight in sacrifice, or we would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
Our sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Ps. 51)**

Assurance of Pardon

"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God." (Rom 5:8-9)

Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor

Christ, the sure and steady anchor
In the fury of the storm
When the winds of doubt blow through me
And my sails have all been torn.
In the suff'ring, in the sorrow,
When my sinking hopes are few,
I will hold fast to the anchor;
It shall never be removed.

Christ, the sure and steady anchor
While the tempest rages on,
When temptation claims the battle
And it seems the night has won;
Deeper still then goes the anchor
Though I justly stand accused;
I will hold fast to the anchor;
It shall never be removed.

Christ, the sure and steady anchor
Through the floods of unbelief;
Hopeless somehow, O my soul, now
Lift your eyes to Calvary.
This, my ballast of assurance;
See His love forever proved;
I will hold fast to the anchor;
It shall never be removed.

Christ, the sure and steady anchor
As we face the wave of death,
When these trials give way to glory,
As we draw our final breath;
We will cross that great horizon,
Clouds behind and life secure,
And the calm will be the better
For the storms that we endure.

Psalm 94

O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast.

They crush your people, O LORD, and afflict your heritage. They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; and they say, “The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.”

Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge—the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.

Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law, to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked.

For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage; for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers? If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. When I thought, “My foot slips,” your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up. When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.

Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.

But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the LORD our God will wipe them out.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever, age after age.

Amen!

God's Word

First Reading: Eph 4:1-16, "Unity of the Faith", p. 977

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Luke 1:57-80, p. 857

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon: Songs of the Saviour:

Zechariah's Benedictus (David Thornhill-Smith)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

J M Neale

The Apostles Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

After each petition:

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

As our Saviour taught us, let us pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.**

Amen.

The Lord's Supper

Invitation to the Table

All baptised Christians who trust in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and seek to lead a new life by God's mercies, are welcome at this table. If you do not profess faith in Christ, simply allow the bread and wine to pass by, and reflect on what is taking place.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Please join in saying the Sanctus ("The Holy", based on Isaiah 6:3)

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Father, thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, by which you have fed us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are members of his body. Renew us by your Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son, and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gifts and Offerings

Gifts and offerings may be placed in the offertory box at the back of the hall. "*Honour the LORD with your wealth and with the first-fruits of all your produce.*" (Prov. 3:9)

Psalm 145

God my king, I will extol you
Bless your name forevermore
Every day, I'll sing your goodness
Hymn the greatness of the Lord
You are praised through generations
of your works we'll always tell
We will praise your matchless goodness
Praise the God of Israel

God is merciful and gracious
Slow to anger, rich in love
He is good to all his creatures
Showers blessings from above
All your works shall bless and thank you
Tell of all your mighty deeds
Celebrate your wondrous kingdom
You shall reign in majesty

Lord your throne will last forever
You will reign from age to age
You are faithful to your promise
You are kind in all your ways
You uphold the weak and falling
Give your strength to weary feet
From your hand you pour forth blessing,
Satisfy our every need

God is righteous to his promise
He is kind in all his ways
He is near to those who seek him
Yet the wicked casts away
He fulfills the good desire
Of his saints who fear his name
Let all peoples praise his goodness
And forever sing his praise

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Benediction

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the Name of Christ, Amen.
