



The Messenger Arrives

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.”
(Lk 1:76-77)

Call to Worship

Behold, God is our salvation;
We will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD God is our strength and our song,
and he has become our salvation. *(Isa 12:2)*

**Sing praises to the LORD,
for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.** *(Isa 12:5)*

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 145. God My King.

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 fulfils the good desire
Of his saints who fear his name
Let all peoples praise his goodness
And forever sing his praise

© Matt Searles, 2020

Confession and Assurance

Hear the summary of the whole law, from our Lord Jesus Christ:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt 22:37-40)

Have mercy on us, O God

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

God's word tells us:

“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Prov 28:13)

Let us therefore confess our sins against God, and against our neighbour,
first in silence and then aloud together.

Please kneel or be seated.

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 judgement.

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.

O Lord, open our lips, and our mouths will declare your praise. 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

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."
(Rom 8:1-2)

How Firm a Foundation

How firm a foundation,
you saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith
in his excellent word!
What more can he say
than to you he has said –
to you, who to Jesus
for refuge have fled?

In every condition –
in sickness and health,
in poverty's vale,
or abounding in wealth;

at home or abroad,
on the land, on the sea,
as days may demand,
shall your strength ever be.

Fear not, I am with you,
O be not dismayed!
For I am your God
and will still give you aid:
I'll strengthen you, help you,
and cause you to stand,
upheld by my righteous,
omnipotent hand.

When through fiery trials
your pathway shall lie,
my grace all-sufficient
shall be your supply;
the flame shall not hurt you;
I only design
your dross to consume,
and your gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus
has leaned for repose,
I will not, I cannot,
desert to his foes;
that soul, though all Hell
should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no, never,
no, never forsake!

Richard Keen (c.1787) MMRecords

Psalm 91. Our Refuge and Fortress.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. **I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”**

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. **He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.**

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday. **A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.**

You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place— the Most High, who is my refuge—

no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.

“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

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: Gen 12:1-9, p. 8

This is the Word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Luke 1:57-80, p. 856

This is the Word of the Lord,

Thanks be to God.

Sermon: The Messenger Arrives (David Thornhill-Smith)

Psalm 103 (a)

Praise God, my soul, with all my heart
Let me exalt his holy name.
Forget not all his benefits;
His praise, my soul, in song proclaim.
The LORD forgives you all your sins,
And heals your sickness and distress;
Your life he rescues from the grave,
And crowns you in his tenderness.

The LORD is merciful and kind,
To anger slow, and full of grace.
He will not constantly reprove,
Or in his anger hide his face.
He does not punish our misdeeds,
Or give our sins their just reward.
How great his love – as high as heaven
Towards all those who fear the LORD!

He satisfies your deep desires
From his unending stores of good,
So that, just like the eagle's strength,
Your youthful vigour is renewed.
The LORD is known for righteous acts
And justice to downtrodden ones.
To Moses he made known his ways,
His mighty deeds to Israel's sons.

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

Almighty and eternal God,

We thank you for reassuring us at this meal of your favour and goodness towards us, and of your word for us.

We thank you that we are truly members of the body of your Son, that we are heirs, by grace, of your eternal kingdom.

We humbly beg you, heavenly Father, to keep us as faithful members of your church, to strengthen us by your Spirit, to draw us together in love and unity, that we may serve through those good works which you have prepared for us to do through Jesus Christ our Lord, and for His glory. Amen.

Gifts and Offerings

Gifts and offerings may be placed in the offertory box at the back of the hall.

"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:7)

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious,
the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious,
Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting,
and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting,
Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains
high soaring above
Thy clouds which are fountains
of goodness and love.

To all life Thou givest,
to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest,
the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish
as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish,
but nought changeth Thee.

Great Father of Glory,
pure Father of Light
Thine angels adore Thee,
all veiling their sight;
All praise we would render,
O help us to see:
'Tis only the splendour
of light hideth Thee!

*Words: Walter C. Smith, 1867
Music: Traditional Welsh melody*

Benediction

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

Notices

Please diarise and pray for the items below:

<i>IN THE WEEK</i>		
Tue 20th Dec	Tots & Toys	
Tue 20th Dec	Food & Chat	
Sun 25th Dec	Christmas Day (9:30am)	The Saviour is Born (Matt 1:18-2:12)

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV); CCLI No: 731672.