



Welcome to our Christmas Day Service 2020

Happy Christmas Everyone!

Prepared by Mervyn and Kathryn



**O Come all, All you unfaithful
by Sovereign Grace**

O come, all you unfaithful
Come, weak and unstable
Come, know you are not alone

O come, barren and waiting ones
Weary of praying, come
See what your God has done

Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you

O come, bitter and broken
Come with fears unspoken
Come, taste of His perfect love

O come, guilty and hiding ones
There is no need to run
See what your God has done

Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you

He's the Lamb who was given
Slain for our pardon
His promise is peace
For those who believe

He's the Lamb who was given
Slain for our pardon
His promise is peace
For those who believe

So come, though you have nothing
Come, He is the offering
Come, see what your God has done

Christ is born, Christ is born
Christ is born for you



Lord Jesus, as you came into the darkness of this world, Love personified, we ask that every person joining us today would experience your great love coming into their lives and satisfying the hungers of each heart. Bring comfort, peace, hope, joy and a stirring deep in our spirit's as we maybe find ourselves cut off from so much of the usual family traditions and celebrations that we treasure at this season. May we discover and experience a deeper dimension of our hearts being filled to overflowing with the love of the Father, and impacting our Christmas more profoundly than we could ever have dreamed. Lord Jesus, we invite you by your Holy Spirit to make Christmas more real, more personal to each one of us, that we might know first hand the reality of your kingdom born in us today.

In Jesus name we pray. **Amen**



**Freedom Peace Grace Mercy Love Joy
Forgiveness Hope Patience Eternal Life
Comfort Friendship Compassion Wisdom
Understanding**

Hello and a very Happy Christmas to you all!

The lighting of our candle, signifies for us today 'Love'.

Wherever you are on this Christmas day, whether you find yourself unexpectedly on your own, or you have been able to meet with another family or a friend, we pray that you would experience the love of God.



Joy to the World We have sung this carol a few times already this year, but what better way to start Christmas day **'Joy to the world, the Lord has come, Let earth receive her King.** Verse 3 says ... He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found. This year, we feel the effects of the curse acutely as we celebrate Christmas amid a global pandemic, but let's sing this song together in joyful hope that his Kingdom has come, his Kingdom is advancing and his Kingdom will fill the entire earth when he appears and the curse is no more. What an amazing hope.

Some of you may have found a sock at the end of your bed this morning bulging with presents. Some of you may have cherished memories of Christmas morning when you were a child or your children were little. For some, the memories are painful; memories of hard times, of someone who is no longer in our lives. Some of you will remember Christmas in war time, with loved ones far away and food in short supply, yet alone luxury food!



This is not just another cute baby that we look at and say, 'Oh, isn't he adorable'. This is Jesus, the one who was with God in the beginning, and the one who is God, (as John chapter 1 in the New Testament tells us). To quote the words from a well-known carol ... **Lo within a manger lies, he who built the starry skies!** This is Jesus to whom we bring the adoration of our hearts, the best worship we can give because he means everything to us and without him, our lives would be very different.

When we adore *this* baby, we remind ourselves of who he actually is and what he means to us. If we are consumed by giving and getting, we might sing words like, **'O come, let us adore him'** without really meaning it, or experiencing the wonder of Jesus, who is God.

And yet, we see God in an animal feeding trough, a manger!

Readings - Luke 2: verse 7, 12 an 16.

7. 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.

12. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

16. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.



- ◆ We can never really get to grips with God in a manger.
- ◆ Our minds cannot understand what was involved in God becoming man.
- ◆ We can't explain how God could become a baby.

But we can take time this Christmas day to adore him!

The last line from a monologue performed by Grace Callaghan in the online service says this; "You'd think they could find something better than hay for a new-born King, wouldn't you?"

- ◆ That's a really good question!
- ◆ Surely God who created the stars could easily arrange for a guest room -where his only son could be born?
- ◆ After all, he had hundreds of years to organise it, surely that was a bit unfortunate?

We discover the answer to that question as we read the Christmas passages in The Bible and find that Jesus was lying in exactly the place that God had planned - a feeding trough! Why? So that he is accessible to everyone. Those full of pride and their own self-importance can humble themselves and come to a stable and find the one who is above all, the King of all Kings. Those who are broken, dirty and covered in shame can come without intimidation, or barriers and find acceptance, welcome and healing. Shepherds or Kings, Rich or Poor, Nobility or those whose lives have not been full of privilege and opportunity. Anyone can come!



Hello, welcome to my secret location!

Can you guess where I am?

I'm in the cupboard under the stairs.

Why? I hear you ask!

Well, not because I have been naughty and Kathryn has shut me in, but to illustrate a couple things from the Christmas story.



1, God is a God who shows up in unexpected places

2, He came to look for people who are lost or hiding away

In the Bible we see God showing up at unexpected places with Moses - through the burning bush, He gives Moses instructions to rescue his people.

With Gideon he unexpectedly appears while Gideon is hiding in a wine press, He speaks a different perspective over Gideon, and empowers him to rescue his people.

And in the Christmas Story, he unexpectedly makes his first appearance in a manger!

I've been thinking about the manger again this Christmas, and it's got me thinking about the ability of human beings to improvise to solve a problem, and God's provision to meet our needs, but not necessarily in the way we may expect.

It's the problem of the lack of accommodation and the improvised crib that partly makes the story so memorable. Every good story has a problem that needs to be overcome and the manger is the wonderful solution to the lack of a cot.

But the manger and stable not only makes for a great and memorable story, but makes the gift of God's Son accessible to everyone.

When Prince George was born a few years ago in a secure London hospital, there is no way that a group of unknown strangers could have just rocked up to see him. But with the birth of Jesus the random group of shepherds had access to meet him, and that metaphorically includes all of us. If we are humble enough to go down to the stable, we can have access to Jesus. Like the shepherds, we are invited to seek and find God's gift of good news for us.

Earlier I said that God is looking for people who are lost or hiding. As an adult, Jesus said that he had come to seek and to save the lost, and elsewhere he tell us that we will find him, if we seek with all our hearts.



During this different Christmas season, I pray that each of us may find and be found by Jesus in unexpected ways, and as Mary and Joseph overcame the lack of a cot by using the manger, may we find creative ways to connect with loved ones that makes this Christmas special. I'm looking forward to doing a crossword over the phone with my mum this afternoon; that's something I've never done before! However, if you are feeling lost in a dark place, God understands and he knows. Psalm 139 makes it clear that we can't hide from God. You are known and so loved by him. I pray this knowledge would bring some colour into your darkness. I quite like hiding in here, but I'd better go out and help with the Christmas dinner prep!



Have a blessed day and even if you are unable to be with friends and family in the way that you had so been looking forward to, may this Christmas day be special as you contemplate afresh the baby in the manger.

Thank you for joining us and we wish you a very Happy Christmas.

Let's speak out the words of 'The Grace' over our families and friends wherever they are, our community here in Ulverston and the wider world as we celebrate Christmas 2020.

God bless you.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.