



Virtual Sunday Service 5 December 2021

Welcome!

(Larry Robbins)

Greetings to those of you who are worshipping at your homes using this Virtual Service. A number of others will be meeting (or perhaps will have met) at the church for the first time in many weeks. Unfortunately due to government regulations we have had to restrict attendance to those who have received all their vaccinations against Covid. Those meeting in church will be using the same readings, prayers and carols as in this document though we shall not be actually taking communion. Know that wherever two or more are gathered in His name, (and I believe this may be construed to include those meeting together virtually) there Christ is also. So welcome, welcome, thrice welcome today.

Call to Worship

(Jim Milmine)

Welcome again to a semi-lockdown service. Troublesome times continue to surround us. Although comparatively blessed in New Zealand, we may still feel apprehensive. BUT, our faith is in our God who loves us unconditionally.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul sums up the chapter on love by saying, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three but the greatest of these is love.”

We gather today to worship the One who created us, the One who has saved us by sending us His Son, Jesus, the One who calls us, the One who equips us and the One who loves us without end. With joyful and loving hearts, let us worship our God as we light our second Advent candle – the candle of LOVE.

Carol: The First Noel

(Jo & Brian Lima)

“Let us worship, ‘born is the King of Israel!’ ”

[The First Noel](#)

Prayer

(Brian Lima)

“Father we gather as your children today to worship You and only You. We freely admit that, in our immaturity, we allow ourselves to be distracted from follow Your Son. We pray that You would now fill us with Your Spirit that we might know You more, that we might follow You more closely.”

“Father we know that as You guide us by Your Spirit, you bring to memory those in our church family that can’t be with us today or even those here today who are facing heartache, loneliness or pain. We ask, Father, that you would...”

1. *...heal those who are unwell and in pain*
2. *...draw close to those that feel alone*
3. *...bless those who are struggling through the pandemic*

We worship You, Father, knowing that you are calling us to love one another that we all might be united. You have been guiding us as a family through the lockdown and we acknowledge that every good that we experienced from others or that we did for others came from You, the God of love. There is no one like You. We praise You and we offer up our prayers that You would glorify Yourself. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Song: What Child is This?

(Jo & Brian Lima)

[What Child is This?](#)

Advent - Love

(Brian Michell)

This week we celebrate the second week of the Advent season, building up to Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ, and we highlight the aspect of Love as seen in the events and significance of Christ’s birth. As Christina Georgina Rossetti described it in her carol:

“Love came down at Christmas,
Love incarnate, love divine”.

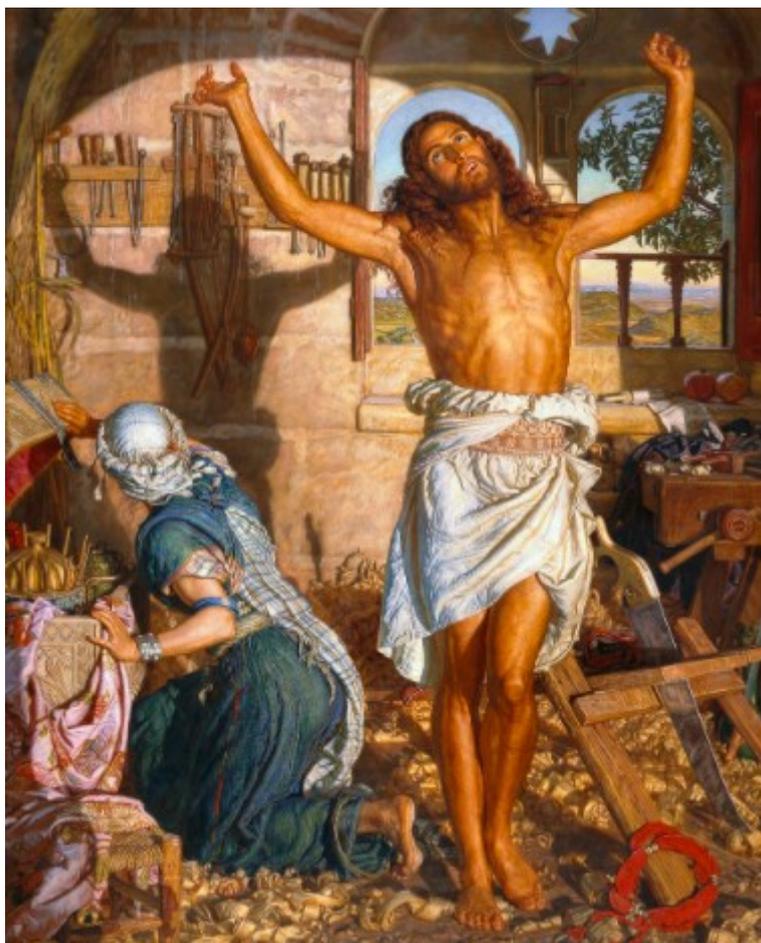
In the birth of Jesus we see God reaching out to humanity in the sending of his Son to become our Saviour, the Son of God taking human form and becoming also the Son of Man; Limiting himself incredibly for our sakes (Philippians 2:5-7), and in his sinless sacrificial death taking on himself the punishment for our sin; Showing his love in being willing to die on our behalf, and thus providing the way for our salvation; Demonstrating the love and mercy of God; Meeting the demands of God’s righteous justice; and Opening the way for our privileged adoption as the children of God.

This is summarised neatly in John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life”*. Here is where God, who IS love (1 John 4:8) demonstrated his love for us in giving his son to bear the punishment for our sin, as summarised in 1 John 4:9 *“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him”*.

The love of God is often linked to his works of grace for us and in us. ‘Grace’ is a uniquely Christian term and concept, reflecting God’s character, mercy and actions. It is a term frequently not even found in other religions and their cultures. Such is the perfect expression however of God’s love for us in the free gift of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Jesus' birth was a time of wonder and rejoicing as we see the angels' praise and joy, the shepherds' excitement and homage, and the wise men's journeying and giving. And so we appropriately celebrate the birth of Jesus as we acknowledge the love of God and reflect that love as we rejoice, praise God, and share the good news of salvation and new life in Jesus, and as we show our love for one another and even in the giving of our gifts to others. Though as we work through the Advent season and approach the joy of Christmas, we are also reminded that God's loving mercy came to us at a huge cost.

Even as we delight at Christmas time in the love and joy of Christ's birth, we are reminded that Jesus was sent by God's love with the purpose of our salvation, and he was born to die, was himself willing to bear the consequences of our sin, and to die on our behalf.



Holman Hunt has a painting entitled 'The Shadow of Death', depicting Jesus as a young man before his years of public ministry, working in his carpenter's shop. He has been sawing wood and has straightened up to ease his back and stretch his arms out. And the shadow of his outstretched arms falls on a board of tools on the wall behind him, showing the form of his arms as though stretched out on the cross, as would indeed occur only a few short years later.

At this Advent time we rejoice in the love of God shown in the birth on earth of his Son Jesus, and yet also in the love of God shown in the death of our Saviour Jesus.

Carol: Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

(Jo & Brian Lima)

"Christ the child was born for you. No greater act of love and deserving of our praise."

[Infant Holy, Infant Lowly](#)

Scripture Reading

Exodus 3:7–22

3⁷ The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

1¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

1² And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you[Ⓜ] will worship God on this mountain."

1³ Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

1⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM.[Ⓜ] This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

1⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD,[Ⓜ] the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

*"This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation.*

1⁶ "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. ¹⁷ And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.'

1⁸ "The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.' ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

2¹ "And I will make the Egyptians favourably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. ²² Every woman is to ask her neighbour and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians."

Sermon "Advent – LOVE"

(Brian Lima)

[Watch the sermon](#)

[Read the Sermon](#)

Lord's Supper

(Brian Lima)

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

11²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The giving of life of Jesus for humanity is a glorious act of love. Jesus said to his disciples, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." And then he said, "You are my friends."

When we eat and drink today, let us remember the sacrifice of Jesus for us that we would have peace with God and each other.

Carol: Once in Royal David's City

(Jo & Brian Lima)

"Once in royal David's city, stood a lowly cattle shed. Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed. This sacred event is God's love incarnate."

[Once in Royal David's City](#)

Benediction

(Brian Lima)

"(Let us be assured)...that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come...will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38–39