



## Christmas Day

Texts: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4, (5-12); John 1:1-14

### Call to worship

Wonder of wonders, God has come to us!

**Not as a judge, but a Saviour,  
not in power, but as a servant.**

Wonder of wonders, God comes to us!

**Not in silence, but in the Word made flesh;  
not in the shadows, but bringing Light.**

Wonder of wonders!

**God is with us!**

Hymn: [Good Christians all rejoice](#)

### Opening Prayers

Angels sang their anthems

at the midnight hour

**to awaken a sleeping creation;**

shepherds came to worship you,

**and went away rejoicing;**

wise ones gave their hearts to you,

**so they could dwell in yours.**

O Immanuel,

**we adore you!**

You came to us as a baby,

**to hold us in your grace;**

you came to us in a stable,

**so we would have no trouble finding you;**

you came to us in poverty,

**to enrich our lives.**

O Beautiful Messenger of Peace,

**we adore you!**

You play with us

**in the streets of the kingdom;**

you build your home

**deep within our souls;**

you walk with us

**in the winter of life.**

O Wisdom from on high,

**we adore you!**

God in Community, Holy in One,

all the faithful lift their songs of joy to you,

even as we pray as Jesus has taught us, saying,

**Our Father. . .**

Hymn: [Away in a Manger](#)

### **Call to Recognition**

God became one of us,

so that we could see the face of love,

hear the voice of peace,

be touched by the hand of grace,

know the heart of mercy.

God comes to us, offering us forgiveness and peace.

We pray together, saying,

**You came in weakness, Mighty God:**

**forgive our grasping for power.**

**You came in humility, Prince of Peace:**

**forgive us for wanting more than others.**

**You came in poverty, Everlasting One:**

**forgive us when we do not see your family**

**sleeping in our streets.**

**You came in gentleness, Wonderful Counsellor:**

**forgive us for the anger we speak**

**and the pain we cause.**

**Child of Bethlehem, be born in us today:**

**forgive us,**

**heal us,**

**make us new;**

**then we will join the angels**

**in singing your praises**

**this Christmas Day**

**and all the days to come.**

*Silence is kept*

## Assurance of pardon

Break forth into singing, children of God: for the Babe comes to comfort us, like a mother rocking her son to sleep, like a father wiping away the tears of his daughter.

(sung unaccompanied)

***Joy to the world! the Lord is come:***

***Let earth receive her King.***

***Let every heart prepare him room,***

***And heaven and nature sing,***

***And heaven and nature sing,***

***And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.***

***He rules the world with truth and grace,***

***And makes the nations prove***

***The glories of his righteousness***

***And wonders of his love***

***And wonders of his love***

***And wonders, wonders of his love.***

***Amen***

## Readings:

[Isaiah 52:7-10](#)

[John 1:1-14](#)

## Reflections to the readings

When I was at secondary school the tradition was that the head boy read the passage from John's gospel when we all trooped down to the Rotherham Parish Church (now renamed Rotherham Minster) for our School Christmas service. Each year as we progressed through school I was chosen to read a lesson in the service as I was one of the better readers in my year group. My hope was that I would be chosen to be head boy, partly because my dad had been before me but mainly because I wanted to do that reading. I loved the words, the rhythm and the drama of it. Sadly for me another boy was chosen and the school broke with tradition and inserted an additional reading just so they could get me to read one last time. It was Betjeman's famous Christmas poem. I practiced and practiced especially the line which goes 'And marbled clouds go scudding by the many steepled London sky.' I struggled to get the cadence right, so much, that on the day I stumbled on the preceding line, so concerned was I to get the line I struggled with right.

Many years later I came across an old cassette tape. I'd forgotten that I had smuggled a tape recorder under my seat and recorded the service. With the distance of years I heard and realised that my stumble over the line preceding the marbled clouds was barely noticeable but I remembered it as a calamity – my memory was healed.

Later in the recording I heard the gospel reading from John. Once again I was surprised that my memory of years ago was not what actually happened. The voice I heard reading was not the head boy; but instead it was the English teacher who lived down our street. For all those years I mainly remembered my disappointment in not being chosen to be head

boy because I so wanted to do 'that' reading. The head boy who was chosen was nowhere near confident or competent enough to do the reading so the teacher stepped in. And I had forgotten that! I needed to hold on, not to the disappointment, but to the fact that I had been given a special reading to use and celebrate my gift as a reader.

I suspect this Christmas is not what any of us would have hoped for. My hope for us all it is that like my memory it is better than we fear and the most important thing is not to focus on the disappointment but rejoice in what we have. The Word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we should be glad.

May Christ Jesus dwell with us all this Christmas.

Tek care - Nigel

## **Prayer**

When you were weary  
of chaos as your companion,  
Everlasting God,  
you whispered to the Word  
who sang Creation's song:  
mountains sprang to attention,  
rivers and oceans splashed your feet,  
and the dust from the Carpenter's table  
was gathered up and shaped in your image.  
Spirit breathed life into us,  
that we might dance with you forever.  
But when we looked beyond your glory,  
and saw the decorative temptations  
the world dangled before our eyes,  
we rushed to embrace sin and death.  
Yet you looked past our rebellion,  
seeing the people we could become,  
and so sent Isaiah and Hannah,  
Simeon and Anna as your faithful witnesses.  
When we continued to turn up the world's volume  
to drown out your pleas,  
you sent the Word of hope  
in the silence of a stable.

Therefore, we join with the angels of Bethlehem's skies,  
and all those who sing of your steadfast love,  
in every time and place:

**Holy are you, God of Christ-filled mornings.  
All creation remembers your steadfast love and faithfulness,  
breaking out in joyous song:  
'Hosanna in the highest!'**

**Blessed is the Babe who brings us the victory of God.  
Hosanna in the highest!**

Holy are you, Mighty God,  
and blessed is the One who comes in your name,  
our Lord and Saviour, your Gift to all the world.  
You would not keep the Word to yourself,  
but sent him to tell us  
of your hopes for us.  
You did not cling to the Prince of Peace,  
but poured him out to end  
our enmity and violence with one another.  
You could not hold your Heart in your hands,  
but allowed him to be broken  
on the tree of Calvary  
that we might be made whole forever.

So, as we celebrate his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection,  
we remember the faith which he models for us,  
and gives to us as our inheritance:

**In the beginning, Christ was with you, creating life;  
on the cross, Christ died with you, defeating death;  
from the empty tomb, Christ rose with you, bringing salvation;  
from glory, Christ will come again with you,  
the Light which could not be overcome.**

As we gather with you,  
send your Spirit upon the bread and the cup,  
and upon us, your children.  
As you sent Jesus to be born of Mary,  
**may we bear the burdens of others;**  
as you became One with us in the Child,  
**may we live at peace with all people;**  
as you have brought us out  
of the shadows of our sin,  
**may we carry the Light of the world  
to all who live in the shadows.**

Then, when we gather at your cradle  
prepared by the people of your kingdom,  
we will sing that new song first carolled at creation  
and echoed through Bethlehem's hills:  
**"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth, peace, goodwill to all."  
Amen.**

Hymn: [Hark the Herald Angels Sing](#)

## **Blessing**

May he, who by his incarnation  
gathered into one things earthly and heavenly,  
fill our lives with his light and joy and peace;  
and the blessing of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
remain with us always. **Amen.**

We dwell in the peace and joy of Christ.  
**Thanks be to God.**