

**Worship at Home – 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2024 (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent)**  
A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Helen Watson

### Introduction

Hello, it's lovely to be with you today on this fourth week of Advent. My name is Helen Watson and I'm a Methodist Local Preacher in the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit.

### Call to worship

We come together in hope, love, joy and peace.  
We come together to worship our Lord and Saviour.

### Hymn – STF 205 – It came upon the midnight clear Edmund H Sears (1810-1876)

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|---|---|---|--|
| 1 | It came upon the midnight clear,<br>that glorious song of old,<br>from angels bending near the earth<br>to touch their harps of gold:<br>'Peace on the earth, good will to men,<br>from heaven's all-gracious King!'<br>The world in solemn stillness lay<br>to hear the angels sing.     | 2 | Still through the cloven skies they come,<br>with peaceful wings unfurled;<br>and still their heavenly music floats<br>o'er all the weary world;<br>above its sad and lowly plains<br>they bend on hovering wing;<br>and ever o'er its Babel sounds<br>the blessèd angels sing.            |
| 3 | Yet with the woes of sin and strife<br>the world has suffered long;<br>beneath the angel strain have rolled<br>two thousand years of wrong;<br>and man, at war with man, hears not<br>the love-song which they bring.<br>O hush the noise, ye men of strife,<br>and hear the angels sing! | 4 | For lo, the days are hastening on,<br>to prophets shown of old,<br>when with the ever-circling years<br>shall come the time foretold,<br>when the new heaven and earth shall<br>own,<br>the Prince of Peace their King,<br>and all the world repeat the song<br>which now the angels sing. |

### Opening prayers

Magnificent God,  
with Mary we praise your name.  
We honour your faithfulness through history; we celebrate your presence with us today;  
we trust your promises for the future, and we pray for the life-giving peace of your Son  
for all the world, this Christmas and always.

God of wisdom and wonder,  
we praise you for your gift of peace:  
for its depth when we are most troubled; for its comfort when we are most afraid;  
for its simplicity when we are most pressured; for its truth when we are most disconcerted;  
and for its stillness when we are most swamped by the noise and busyness of Christmas.  
We praise you, in Jesus' name. .

God of peace and plenty,  
forgive us: when we tarnish the peace of Christmas with our selfishness;  
when we silence the peace of Christmas with our noise;  
when we put presents before your presence.  
Grant us your peace.  
In Jesus' name we pray.

Dear Lord,  
what we most long for is peace.  
Peace of heart, mind, and spirit; peace from burdens, guilt and past mistakes.  
So we thank you for your gift of peace, given through your gracious forgiveness, loving acceptance and the assurance of your continuing presence with us. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

### **Bible reading – Micah 5: 2 – 5a**

<sup>2</sup> The Lord says,

“Bethlehem Ephrathah, you might not be  
an important town in the nation of Judah.  
But out of you will come for me  
a ruler over Israel.  
His family line goes back  
to the early years of your nation.  
It goes all the way back  
to days of long ago.”

<sup>3</sup> The Lord will hand over his people to their enemies.  
That will last until the pregnant woman bears her promised son.  
Then the rest of his relatives in Judah  
will return to their land.

<sup>4</sup> That promised son will stand firm  
and be a shepherd for his flock.  
The Lord will give him the strength to do it.  
The Lord his God will give him  
the authority to rule.  
His people will live safely.  
His greatness will reach  
from one end of the earth to the other.

<sup>5</sup> And he will be our peace  
when the Assyrians attack our land.  
They will march through our forts.  
But we will raise up against them many shepherds.  
We'll send out against them  
as many commanders as we need to.

### **Reflection on the reading**

The prophet Micah lived around 800BC not far from Jerusalem. He lived in a time of turmoil and his prophecies were often of doom and catastrophe for his nation, Israel. But he also prophesied about God's mercy and peace, and we just heard him speaking about the birth of the Messiah, God's ruler on earth. Micah said that the Messiah would rule fairly and justly and bring peace and security. We now know that Jesus was that ruler, born in Bethlehem as Micah had prophesied. He came to bring peace not just to Israel, but to the whole of the world.  
The story continues some 800 years later – a long time to wait, I know! Mary, a young Israelite girl betrothed to Joseph, would have heard about the prophecies of Micah and the other prophets. Now she was part of the story.  
When Mary knew that she was going to have baby Jesus, she went to see her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also going to have a baby.

Both recognised that Mary's child was the coming Messiah. In great joy, Mary sang a hymn of praise and worship to God, a song so wonderful that it is still sung today, 'I celebrate you, God, because of what you have done for me. You are the mighty one! Everyone will see what you have done through me. You have brought down rulers and lifted those who are good. You have fed the hungry and sent away the rich, just as you promised you would.'

There is nothing placid or static about Mary's song. It is a song about righting wrongs, about a peace that will come through justice, and the action to achieve it. God will transform the injustices enjoyed by those who are rich into blessings for the humble and hungry. Mary looks forward to a salvation that can be seen, tasted and embodied in the lives of ordinary people

In times of turmoil people need hope and they need to know that peace will come. God has promised good things for all, he has promised peace and security. He calls us now to play our part in bringing in that salvation and bringing his justice, peace and hope to our wonderful, fragile world.

Now we will sing our version of Mary's song.

### **Hymn – STF 186 – Tell out my soul** Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926-2024)

- 1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
Unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;  
tender to me the promise of his word;  
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.
- 2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his Name!  
Make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;  
his mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
his holy Name, the Lord, the Mighty One.
- 3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!  
Powers and dominions lay their glory by.  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,  
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.
- 4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!  
Firm is his promise, and his mercy sure.  
Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
to children's children and for evermore!

## **Prayers for the world, others and ourselves**

There is a response. If you would like to, when I say 'Emmanuel, God with us,'  
Please respond with:

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

Let us pray.

Lord God, Christmas is almost here.

With joy and celebration, we worship you and bring to you our prayers for ourselves and others.

Emmanuel, God with us,

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

For those, who like Mary and Joseph, seek shelter in a strange land, a strange place.

For those far from family and friends.

For those needing shelter, companionship, warmth, friendship or food.

Emmanuel, God with us,

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

For those who are suffering from fighting, war and cruelty. Those who have lost family, friends, homes and countries.

Emmanuel, God with us,

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

For those who receive no gifts, no parcels wrapped with love and care, no surprises or treasures beneath the Christmas tree. For those who have had no cards of greetings and remembrance.

For those who will speak to no one and see no one over this Christmas.

Emmanuel, God with us,

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

We pray for those who are too ill, too frail, or too near to death to lift their eyes in praise and celebration. For those who work from choice or need over Christmas, for those who do so much to meet their needs of others and show them care.

Emmanuel, God with us,

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

We pray for those who have been joy givers to us; who have been hope givers to us; who have shown us care and compassion; who have blessed us with words of peace and offered us unconditional love.

Emmanuel, God with us,

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

For ourselves and all those whose names and needs are treasured in our hearts we offer our heartfelt prayers this Christmas time

Emmanuel, God with us

**Be with those for whom we pray.**

We pray all our prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

## Hymn – STF 185 – Sing we the King Charles Silvester Horne (1865-1914)

- 1 Sing we the King who is coming to reign;  
glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!  
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,  
joy to the nations when Jesus is King:  
*Come let us sing: Praise to our King,  
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:  
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:  
Glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.*
  
- 2 All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;  
freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;  
justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring;  
wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King:  
*Chorus*
  
- 3 Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;  
doubt shall not darken his witness within;  
hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;  
love is victorious when Jesus is King:  
*Chorus*
  
- 4 Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray;  
hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day  
when this new song your creation shall sing;  
Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King:  
*Chorus*

### Blessing

The angels are still singing, prophets are still speaking. Hush the noise, let's listen to them.  
And may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and those we  
love, now and always. **Amen**

**Merry Christmas to you all!**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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