

Notices & Welcome

Good Morning, and welcome to Tyndale on this first Sunday of December. This morning's service will include the act of Holy Communion. If you are a visitor, with us on line or here in the church, I extend a special warm welcome and hope you feel at home with us.

Our worship is being conducted by our minister Michael Docker. I would like to thank him for leading us, and look forward to hearing God's message through his teaching and preaching.

On Tuesday, our in-person Coffee Shop will take place here in the Sanctuary from 10am until 12 noon, where a warm welcome will await everyone.

On Wednesday our *time @tyndale* will be held in the Sanctuary. We will be welcoming the Bristol Brass Consort who will be playing a series of festive tunes for our entertainment. Refreshments are served from 7.30pm with the concert starting at 8pm. Please do join us for what is always an enjoyable evening of brass music.

Our Thursday Zoom coffee shop takes place at 11.00am, with the sign in details being able to be obtained through the Tyndale web site.

Next Sunday evening we will be holding our Gift Service here at Tyndale at 5.30pm. If you haven't already done so, please have a look at the Christmas tree at the back of the church where you can take your labels for the Giving Tree Project and purchase the gifts for your chosen charity. More details are next to the tree.

The next notice concerns the revised version of the Church Directory. Tina Parsons is hoping to produce this early in the New Year. Please could you advise her of any changes to your details, and if you are new to Tyndale and would like your contact details to be included, please could you provide these to her. I would stress that it is only produced for members of the congregation and is only supplied to people included in it.

Thank you.

Lighting of the Advent Candles – II

('Come to be our hope, Lord Jesus' during)

Leader As the light makes its frail way

All We ready ourselves for the journey

Leader As candles flicker in the air

All We gather our frailty about us

Leader As the flames take, hold & begin to shine

All We reach out in faith,

Leader As the flames steady and light spreads around

All We look forward to all that God has promised

Leader As candle light shines

All We see the light of God shining & we rejoice.

BPW143 'Hark the glad sound'

Prayer

Lord God, as the candles burn we burn with longing and yearning for your presence; as the candles flicker we tremble before you as we acknowledge our failure; as the candles shine we look to the shining of the light of your love in our lives and in the world – Lord, we worship you; you are present in the world in ways we can't see but can imagine; touching lives, rekindling hope, strengthening peace, reconciling and mending; this we believe and proclaim as we come before you with longing, yearning hearts;

Lord, as we worship we ask you to overcome the distance between what we believe and what we see all around us; so that we might more truly see you and more truly serve your purposes, for hope, peace and reconciliation, for the mending of the world –

Lord, touch our lives, we pray; forgive us for all that is past, and lead us through this time and from this place to live for you in the world, for Christ's sake – we say the Lord's Prayer together:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

CG 28 'Comfort, comfort now, my people'

OT Reading: [Isaiah 40: 1-11](#)

'Word of justice'

NT reading: [Mark 1: 1-8](#)

BPW141 'Earth was waiting'

Sermon – Hope in the Word

Lord in this time may what is spoken ring with truth, may what is heard & understood be touched by your Spirit & may what is decided lead us on toward your Kingdom

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

Not for a long time more than now has the world needed a message of comfort & hope.

This has been a hard time & it continues, round the world. Oh, maybe not so hard as, say, during World War II; not so much destruction, wanton killing, fear, an uncertain future..

Yet, probably, if you or your loved ones were hit early on in the pandemic by the ravages of Coronavirus; it will have been a hard time indeed.

So much death, fear & uncertainty. Vaccines have reduced it all considerably of course &, as many have said, 'we have to learn to live with it'

But it's easy to forget how bad things were just a few months ago; and how painful things continue to be in many places.

How very Eurocentric we are (Brexit notwithstanding); in remote areas of the world, where you can't just pop along to your local pharmacy for a jab; it must be desperate.

Not only that, but think of the cold desperation of people on a leaky dinghy in the Channel and the less extreme but *horrible* desperation on a remote Yorkshire farm with no power...

Comfort, O comfort my people..

And us? Not so desperate, of course, but lots of trying circumstances, in various ways..

'Comfort, O comfort my people'

Not for a long time, more than this Advent have we needed a message of comfort & hope

Isaiah's people were in exile when his message was preached.. *'by the rivers of Babylon'*; far away from everything they knew and loved – far from 'the comforts of home'

Nothing like getting home, is there? After a spell in hospital perhaps; after a long journey - 'it's nice to get home' we say, don't we?

Spare a thought for all those without a home to call their own this season – the home/less on the streets of our cities, of course; refugees and asylum seekers – those dinghies! –

& we who live by faith in Christ? 'this world is not our home, we're just a passin' thru' -

While we built homes and families and careers; while we did as we were told, we Baptists, Methodists, others – 'seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile'

Preachers hiding from the authorities; congregations meeting for worship outside villages; farther back, Christians in many a place arrested, tortured & executed because they 'didn't fit; didn't belong in this world – 'this world is not my home'

We who are Christian are supposed to be *one* with those who suffer; *alongside* those who are rejected and homeless and *desperate* in our world..

We're supposed to know what it means to live in this world without any of the things the world takes for granted.

'Comfort, O comfort my people' says the Lord,

Perhaps we're supposed to be like John.. *'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"*

Not for a long timer, I think, more than in this Advent, have we needed a message of comfort & hope. *'one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight"*

That's us, isn't it? That's the church, this Advent- in a comfortless, exiled, cold, virus-ravaged world – a message of comfort and hope for any, for all –

A message that hoves into view at Christmas; Jesus, the light of the world, the hope of the nations; the morning star; Immanuel, God with us.

But in Advent, ahead of Christmas, 'prepare the way of the Lord' – that's us, like John... And who's John?

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

Mark tells us that John came; living in the desert, exiled from normal society; wild & free and *preaching a message of repentance* (that's Advent really – preparing the way of the Lord);

Well if the Lord is going to find a way into our lives and our world the 'rough places' are going to have to be made smooth & the 'uneven ground' is going to have to be made level

we & our world are going to have to turn from our sin, greed & unjust ways; aren't we going to have to find ways of ending homelessness?; of no longer rejecting asylum seekers?; of getting rid of foodbanks? Of spreading vaccines to the poor?

Prepare the way of the Lord..

There's a problem with the modern celebration of Advent; it's all about lights, Christmas adverts & ridiculously over-priced calendars full of whisky, cigars & perfumes – it's full of all the anticipation of a warm, bright, comfortable Christmas.

But that's not really Advent. Advent is a time of darkness - '...that mourns in lonely exile here'; It's a time for *exile*. It's a time for *desperation*. A time for *mourning*. A time for *preparation* – '*prepare the way of the Lord*'

It's a time for John – we're to be like John, I think.

John's the beginning in Mark's gospel - 'the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ'

Not Luke – Mary & Joseph & shepherds & angels & donkeys etc; not Matthew – wise men & genealogies & Herod & Egypt.

In Mark, no Christmas, just John...maybe we are to be like John; exiled from normal society; wild and free and *preaching a message of repentance* - *like many a church in many a land* -

Not respectable and part-of-the-scene but different and strange and swimming against the current of our money-and-security obsessed world.

I was never brave enough – you may be glad 'cos it's not likely to happen now – to suggest to any church that just once it might be an idea to cancel Christmas altogether..

I got in deep water when, many years ago, I put together a whole nativity service based on John the Baptist. We had a large junior church at the time, & mums & dads & grannies came to see little Johnny & Katie dressed as shepherds & wise men & – you know what usually happens when little children put on a Nativity play..

And instead of that – no costumes, donkeys, hay, stables – no 'O little town of Bethlehem'

Just some kind of a pageant with 'locusts & wild honey & camel hair'!! I've still got the scars!

Well, I said, it's still Advent – & Advent is for John...& us? Exiled, lonely, mourning, *desperate* – like our world?

And John's message – essentially, 'Comfort, O comfort my people' – that's the message – the Advent message – comfort and hope –

not in the way the world seeks comfort and hope but God's way – the gospel way – the way that leads from a stable to a Cross via the hard words of a man driven to sacrifice & service – & *us* – 'take up your cross and follow me'....

That's the way of comfort – and hope – hope in the Word of God; the counter-intuitive, pro-all the lowliest of the world, the asylum-seekers and the refugees and the homeless – in the beginning was the Word...

God is with us. We say at Christmas..Not with the pretty aliens & the groaning banqueters & the flying carrots of the world....

but *with us* - the lowly, disregarded, desperate, half-dead people of the world 'who mourn in lonely exile here' – for whom 'this world is not our home, we're just a passin thru'

with *us*...with John....with *us* – '*Comfort, O comfort my people, says the Lord (table)*

Words of Offering

Lord we come to you out of the lonely exile of our hearts & in the midst of a cold, dark, often desperate world – seeking the light and comfort of Christmas, but ready *now* to prepare your way, as we seek to love justice & fairness & live for these things in our world. So we give of ourselves in these & all our gifts & in this bread & wine – & look, with hopeful hearts, as the things of earth are transformed into the things of heaven. Amen

Grace

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

BPW310 'how lovely on the mountains'

Communion

Invitation

The table of the Lord is spread. Here we see in broken bread and poured out wine not merely symbols, but the very substance of the body and blood of Christ, signs of the Kingdom and emblems of salvation. Yet there is no magic here, no instant access to the things of God, but in Advent sign, promise, and sacrament – God's way of salvation, made real for us in the things of earth.

And here is issued a call; not to the worthy, and the saintly, but to the sinful, and the poor-in-spirit, the ones who know themselves to be in need of God's constant help and forgiveness and grace – who, in Advent, are prepared to wait for His Word.- a call to any, who are prepared to hear and respond: 'come, and eat and drink, and live'.

Confession

Lord our God, here at this table we confess our part in a waiting world, a world grown tired of its sufferings and its sins; we share the tiredness, and we wait with longing hearts.

We confess our part in a failing church, a church often preoccupied with its own survival and slow to serve the world for Christ's sake; we share the failure, and we turn again with repentant hearts.

We confess our own sinfulness – a hasty word, a thoughtless action, a neglect of what's good, right & true.

We groan at our own weaknesses & we come to you with needy, expectant hearts.

Father forgive us and as we wait in Advent remind us once again of your promises –

(silence) the Lord says, 'See! I am coming soon!'

Thanks be to God for forgiving us and promising to come to us; so help us to continue to seek the things of Christ's Kingdom.

Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you; the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, take, eat, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me. 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 memory of me – for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanksgiving –

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.

It is not only right, it is our duty and our joy at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise, Holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ, your only Son, our Lord.. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying

Holy Holy Holy, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

God our Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on all your people that we may have faith & upon these gifts of bread & wine & this eating & drinking that this may be for us the mystery of the body & blood of our risen Lord – so that we may receive Christ to ourselves once again, for the strengthening of our faith, the assuring of our hope, & the deepening of our love.

Responses

Leader Here is bread

All **For us to eat in hope**

Leader Here is wine

All **For us to drink in faith.**

Leader How shall we eat?

All **Waiting for the Kingdom: hungry for peace & justice; looking to feed on Christ**

Leader How shall we drink?

All **Waiting for the new wine of the Kingdom; thirsty for love; looking for Christ to refresh our souls.**

Leader With all who wait, hunger & thirst for the life of God

All **We eat and drink in faith**

Bread & Wine

Prayer after communion

Strengthen for service, Lord, the lives that have been offered in the cause of holiness:

May ears that have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute, and ready to listen for every whisper of peace and reconciliation in the world

May tongues that have used words be ready to fall silent before your Word.

May eyes that have witnessed the drama of salvation here shine with the light of hope and look for every sign of your Kingdom

Finally may hands that have held bread and wine be quick to reach out in friendship and willing to work for the healing of all.

So may the whole of our lives reflect the wholeness of your Kingdom, as we wait for your coming, Amen

BPW146 'The light of the morning is breaking'

Benediction