

Coming, Ready or Not

A Christmas Service

Leader: Christmas is a time of anticipation and of waiting, of preparation and expectation. Two thousand years ago, the Jews were waiting expectantly for the promised Messiah to come

Reading: *Isaiah 9 v 6,7*

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."

Hymn: **Come Thou Long –Expected Jesus**

Leader: The Jews expected Him, and yet when He did come they were caught unawares. He didn't come in the way they expected, and so they couldn't accept that Jesus was the one God had promised. They expected a king and conquering ruler. God came to earth in a humble stable.

Reading: *Luke 2 v 1-7*

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Hymn: **Child in the manger** (tune: Morning has broken)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we marvel that you entered our world at all. We are in awe of your greatness, manifested by your willingness to take on human form and to begin your earthly ministry in such lowly conditions. No palace and servants awaited you. Instead you came to serve and to show us what true love is.

Forgive us for our failure to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and to love others as ourselves. Forgive us for wanting you to be a Saviour we are comfortable with, one who saves us from the unwelcome consequences of our actions, but leaves us to do as we wish with the rest of our lives. Give us the strength to accept you as you must be, the Lord of every part of our lives. For we pray this in your name. **Amen.**

Leader: Jesus' birth wasn't known by the mighty and learned, the only ones to hear the angels' song of welcome were lowly shepherds.

Reading: Luke 2 v 8-20

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Prayer: The angels sang praises to you, O God, on the night of Jesus' birth. The shepherds' fear turned to amazement and then they, too, glorified and praised you. O God, our Father, how much more should we praise you, not only for the joy of Christmas, bringing the promise of peace, but also for the hope of salvation for all who accept Jesus as Saviour.

As we approach this Christmas, help us to look forward to your promise that Jesus will return one day in power, might and majesty.

We ask this in His Name. **Amen**

Hymn: **It Came Upon the Midnight Clear**

Devotion: *COMING, READY OR NOT (or Speaker)*

Reading: **Matthew 24 v36-44**

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, We admit that there are times when we don't want you to return yet. There are still things we want to do, experiences to enjoy, relationships to form and strengthen.

Forgive us for our lack of a sense of urgency about doing your work. Forgive us for acting as if we have unlimited time, for thinking that tomorrow will be soon enough to show your loving care to our neighbour, to speak to that acquaintance about you, to apologise and be reconciled to the one we hurt.

Forgive us, and remind us that our time is a gift from you. Show us how you would have us use it so that when you return you will find us ready.

For we pray in your name. **Amen.**

Leader: Christmas is a time to celebrate the fact that Jesus was born to save us from the consequences of our sins. Christmas is a time to remember that Jesus is coming a second time and to prepare for that time.

Jesus is coming again, whether you are ready or not — Are you ready?

Reflection **No Room**

It started with your birth in a stable, Lord, when there was no room for you in the inn.

No room for your teaching in the minds of the leaders and rulers, because they would have had to admit that their own rules for living were not God's rules.

No room for you as the people's Messiah, because your kingdom was in Heaven, not here on earth where they wanted national independence.

And so they crucified you, there was no room for you on earth at all.

But then they found that no room on earth was big enough to hold you as you rose from the tomb, triumphing over death. You returned to the Father's right hand in Heaven, truly God but now also truly human.

The Jews had no room for you, but what about us, do we have room for you in the busy lives we live, or is that something we plan to do one day when things quieten down a bit?

When you return the question will not be do I have room for you, it will be do you have room for me?

"The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1 v 9 - 12

Hymn: Jesus Christ, The King and Saviour

Blessing: I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. **Ephesians 3v17-21**