

Tavistock Circuit 'At Home Service' 19th December, 2021 – Prepared by Christine Jeffery.

Welcome in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on this fourth Sunday in Advent.

Theme:- The cost of Christmas

Hymn:- Long ago, prophets knew

1. Long ago, prophets knew Christ would come, born a Jew,
Come to make all things new; bear His people's burden, freely love and pardon.

Chorus – Ring bells, ring, ring, ring! Sing choirs, sing, sing, sing!
When He comes, when He comes, who will make Him welcome?

2. God in time, God in man, this is God's timeless plan:
He will come, as a man, born Himself of woman, God divinely human:

Chorus

3. Mary, hail! Though afraid, she believed, she obeyed,
In her womb, God is laid; till the time expected, nurtured and protected:

Chorus

4. Journey ends! Where afar Beth'lem shines, like a star,
Stable door stands ajar, unborn Son of Mary, Saviour, do not tarry.

Chorus – Ring bells, ring, ring, ring! Sing choirs, sing, sing, sing!
Jesus comes! Jesus comes! We will make Him welcome!

Let us pray together:- Prayer of thanksgiving and confession

We thank You Father that You are never too busy to listen to our prayers. We are sorry for the times when we have let You down. Please forgive us for the times when we haven't put You first in our lives and the needs of others near us. Thank You God that at this season of giving presents, You gave us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of Your Son Jesus, who gave Himself to be our Saviour, Guide and Friend all through our lives, and that Jesus is now sitting at Your right hand, His rightful place of honour, interceding Father on our behalf. Please show us Father, Your will for our lives, and the faith to put it into practice, thank You Father. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn – Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord

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!

Reading:- Luke 1 vs.46-55 – Keep your Bibles with you

Reflection on the theme –

Malcolm Fuller tells this story. A man sat down after Christmas to review the damage. He wrote to a friend, 'the toys we bought are already broken, the tree has lost its freshness. We have overeaten, overspent and overlooked'. We overlook the true meaning of Christmas if we forget that Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

The cost of the first Christmas

- 1. The cost to Mary –** Mary was engaged to Joseph. The Angel told her she was chosen by God to be the Mother of His Son Jesus. As God was the Father, conception was by the Holy Spirit. Mary didn't understand, but gave herself to God's will and plan for her life. Then she recited the Magnificat which we read for our Scripture reading – Luke 1 vs. 46-55. No doubt people talked,. At the birth, the only place to be found was a stable,. Later Mary and Joseph married and had other children, but because she gave birth first to God's Son, history was made. Mary must have found life bringing up Jesus very difficult, especially at Calvary as she saw wicked men crucifying her Son, what sorrow and anxiety she must have felt. **What a cost to Mary.**
- 2. The cost to Joseph –** Joseph was a man who did what was right, so when Mary told him she was pregnant before their marriage, not wanting to disgrace her, he was going to break off the engagement – engagement was very binding in those days. But God explained things to Joseph in a dream, so he stood by Mary and looked after Jesus as his own Son. After Jesus was born and the visit of the wise men, an angel again told Joseph to go to Egypt with Mary and Jesus because King Herod would seek to kill Jesus. Again, Joseph obeyed God's instructions. Then after Herod died, God again told Joseph in a dream to take Mary and Jesus back to Israel, but because Archelaus (Herod's son), was on the throne God again told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Galilee. They lived in a town called Nazareth – words of the Prophet again came true – 'He shall be called a Nazarene'. **What a cost to Joseph.**
- 3. The cost to Mothers and Fathers in and around Bethlehem –** It cost them the lives of all their baby boys, 2 years old and under. When Herod realised the wise men weren't going to come back and tell him where Jesus was, but had gone home another way, he was furious and ordered his soldiers to kill all baby boys 2 years old and under. **What a cost to those Parents.**
- 4. The cost to the Wise Men –** It cost them a long journey, expensive gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh, it also changed their lives and a journey home by another route.
- 5. The cost to the Shepherds –** The Angel told them to go to Bethlehem to see Jesus, the Saviour of the world, they went with haste and found Mary, Joseph and the Baby in the manger. Life was never the same for them again.

6. **The cost to Jesus** – It cost Jesus a life of sacrifice and service, a cruel death that is unmatched in history, where He sacrificed His life, His flesh and blood as a sacrifice for the sin of the whole world.
7. **The cost to God** – It cost God more than anyone, for it cost the Father His only Son. For God so loved the world, the perfect world He made and everyone of us in it. But because it is against His nature to sin, a great price had to be paid for our sin that we can come to God, so God gave His Son Jesus at a great price. Jesus gave His life on the cross as payment for freedom of our sins, Now the barrier between God and us was destroyed,. **The cost of God to save us, and it all began at the first Christmas, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**
8. Later the cost of the first Christmas to the early Apostles and the Church - persecution and sometimes martyrdom. It also cost Missionaries untold suffering to spread the good news of the Gospel of Jesus.

The question I put to you and to myself now – **Is Christmas too costly?**

1. **Christmas is too costly if** – it does not bring hope to us. Old Testament prophecies pointed to the coming of the Messiah. People looked for 4,000 years,. To a whole world almost without hope, the message of the Angels came. Today that same message of hope is available to each of us, to accept or reject it.
2. **Christmas is too costly if** – we do not accept God's gift of Jesus.
3. **Christmas is too costly if** – we do not experience the forgiveness of sin. The Angel said to Joseph 'He shall save His people from their sins'.
4. **Christmas is too costly if** – we do not spread joy. Joy filled the hearts of all who heard the message of Jesus, it's the same today.
5. **Christmas is too costly if** – we do not spread peace and goodwill to all. Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and goodwill to all.
6. **Christmas is too costly if** – we do not spread the good news. The Angel said 'to you is born this day a Saviour', we must share the good news with others,
7. **Christmas is too costly if** – we do not exercise faith. Faith is a word for Christmas. God's faith for man is revealed by His gift of Jesus. Can anyone doubt that God cares for us?
8. **Christmas isn't too costly** for us if we respond to His invitation. God loves us tremendously and wants to be part of our lives – not only at Christmas, but every day.
God bless you all – Amen

Prayers of intercession:- Heavenly Father, as we celebrate the birth of Your Son, we bring to You in His Name the needs of the Church and of the world.

We pray for the Church –

For the Christian family celebrating this festival in so many different ways, and for those who dare not celebrate openly.

For Christians in countries where there is persecution; for Christians in our own country, with whom we share our celebrations.

For our Church family.

Help each of us to be glad of Your presence, and to rejoice at the coming of Jesus. Give to us the help we need to be loyal and faithful, knowing that with Your power, nothing need make us afraid.

We pray for peace in the world -

For countries where there is war;

For places where there is hatred between races;

For the leaders of the nations.

By Your Spirit among us, may bitterness and hatred be cast out, and the peace and goodwill of Christmas find a place in the hearts of all people.

We pray for people in need -

For those who are ill – in body, mind or spirit;

For the lonely and bereaved;

For the refugee and the homeless;

For the hungry and the poor.

Be near to all who especially need Your love; let Your Spirit be with those who care for them, and give to all of us the desire to help when and where we can.

We pray for our families and friends -

For those away from us today

For those who have asked for our prayers

For those who will join us in our family parties.

In all our celebrations, in our eating and drinking. In our giving and receiving gifts. In all we do at this time, may we remember Him whose birth we celebrate and give thanks for His coming. Amen

Hymn:- We have a gospel to proclaim

1. We have a gospel to proclaim, good news for all throughout the earth;
The gospel of a Saviour's Name: we sing His glory, tell His worth.

2. Tell of His birth at Bethlehem – not in a royal house or hall,
But in a stable dark and dim, the Word made flesh, a light for all.

3. Tell of His death at Calvary, hated by those He came to save,
In lonely suffering on the cross, for all He loved, His life He gave.

4. Tell of that glorious Easter morn, empty the tomb, for He was free.
He broke the power of death and hell that we might share His victory.

5. Tell of His reign at God's right hand, by all creation glorified.
He sends His Spirit on His Church to live for Him, the Lamb who died.

6. Now we rejoice to name Him King: Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
This gospel-message we proclaim: we sing His glory, tell His worth.

Blessing:- Go to share the good news of Christ's coming, and may Jesus who is 'Immanuel' be with you always. Amen.