Worship Sheet for Sunday 6th December 2020, the Second Sunday in Advent

Compiled by Barbara Spencer of Berkley Street Methodist Church, St Neots

*Consider playing excerpts from the beginning of Handel’s “Messiah” which takes texts from the reading from Isaiah*

Call to Worship: We come as the family of Jesus Christ to give thanks and to worship him.

Hymn: StF 185 Sing we the King who is coming to reign (The Glory Song on You Tube)

Circuit Liturgy for Advent 2 ~ Candle of Hope

Reader 1: God said, ´I have heard and I will act.

Reader 2: We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

Reader 3: Today we light this second candle and think about where hope touches our lives.



 Candle is Lit

Reader 1: Lord when it is hard to see the way:

ALL: Give us hope.

Reader 2: When it is difficult to sift the truth:

ALL: Give us hope.

Reader 3: When life is draining:

ALL: Give us hope. Amen.

Hymn: 181 (StF) Of the Father’s love begotten - also on You Tube

Prayers: Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks that even in the dark days you offer a ray of light. We see signs of your love in the generosity of people giving time and money to help those in need. We thank you for the people who have proclaimed the Gospel to us through the ages and in our everyday lives, and, most of all, for your son Jesus Christ who teaches us about your love for us. We long to worship you as you would like but so often fall short in our thoughts, words and actions. Forgive us. At this Advent time when we make our preparations to celebrate the birth of Jesus help us to keep everything in your perspective and to hold on to your values. Help us to be filled with the spirit of eager anticipation as we remember the true meaning of Christmas and Advent. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer (*there is a good musical version by Don Moen (ANFGM 16th Anniversary Collection) on You Tube*)

Readings: Isaiah 40: 1 – 11 and Mark 1: 1 – 8

In recent times, it has felt as if we are being held in captivity by an unseen and dangerous oppressor. We struggle to understand how to respond, although we are gradually learning more about the virus and how it behaves. However, at last and after much waiting we can begin to see some grounds for optimism. Vaccines have been discovered and will be available very soon. Some light in what seems to be a dark world at times. There are resonances with our Bible readings set for today.

The passage from Isaiah is set in a time when the Israelites were in exile. They had a torrid time when Jerusalem was destroyed and they were taken into captivity, with all of the suffering that that entailed. Through it all, some had remained faithful to God and now there was the promise of better things to come. God tells Isaiah that he has forgiven his people and they will know his gentleness and the warmth of his embrace. In all that happens, God is constant, unlike the flowers and grass that wither in time. Further in the book, we read that God’s promise comes true. The Persians overthrew the Babylonians and Cyrus, their king, liberated the Israelites, though kept them under his rule with a degree of benevolence. Can you imagine what it must have been like? I think we may have similar feelings when we are able to get back *to some semblance of normality. Will we remember to celebrate with praise and thanks to God? Or will we think that everything is just as it ought to be and forget the lessons we have learnt about the importance of our relationship with God, family, friends and strangers, especially those in need? Will the pressures of the* busyness and materialism of our modern world take over once more?

The Jews in Jesus’ time had lost sight of what God was asking of them in their relationship with him. Mark begins his account using the word *gospel;* the good news of Jesus Christ, Son of God. An amazing story recorded for posterity. However, the reading today is about a most unlikely evangelist. John had taken himself away from Jerusalem with its worldly values and rituals. He must have been a strange sight, and rather smelly! Yet people flocked to hear him and be baptised because he made sense, preaching about the fulfilment of God’s promise from the times of Isaiah and that this was a time of preparation for the arrival of the Messiah. Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit, a remarkable assertion that must have been difficult for the Jews to understand. 2000 years later we can see how it fitted together. How do we respond? Are we aware of God’s love and presence in our lives, even in the dark and difficult times? God has shown himself to be constant, faithful, and a God of love - and he *is* with us, sharing our experience.

As we approach the shortest day of the year, with the added anxieties this year, let us remind ourselves of why we have Advent candles, bringing light and hope now and in the future. Let us prepare for the coming of our Saviour and remember that he came to earth because God loves you and me, and all of his people. “Amazing love”. John and Mark knew and wanted to share the good news. Let us try to do the same!

Our prayers for the world: StF 706 and on You Tube: Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Take a few moments of quiet reflection, perhaps with some suitable background music and/or a candle to consider the stories you have heard this week of people in need, some may be known to you, others will be strangers.

Think of:-

 the desert experiences for some: isolation and desolation, lost jobs, hungry families, those made homeless for various reasons, those cast aside because they do not fit in, the desperate, those who have lost their way

 those struggling with illness and disease, frightened to get help or do not know who to contact

the people who are changing lives for the better: health care workers, scientists, teachers, politicians, neighbours and friends, family, our church family, those who are attending to the needs of the people and offering respite, reflecting God’s love in the world and bringing light, joy and friendship

Father God, we bring these prayers of concern for your world and give you thanks that even in the darkest times, your love is reflected in loving action and prayers. We ask your blessing on all who are your messengers of light, hope and love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: 177 StF and on You Tube Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Lord, help us to make the right preparations for your coming. Be with us now and always and enable us to be the people you want us to be, sharing the good news of your love and salvation. Amen.