

“Angels, Help us to Adore Him: Week 4”

Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron

December 20, 2020 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

Hymns for Worship Video – December 20, 2020

“Hope is a star” #119 in the Book of Praise

Brian Arthur Wren | William Patrick Rowan

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Hope is a star that shines in the night
Leading us on till the morning is bright

Chorus

When God is a child there's joy in our song
The last shall be first
And the weak shall be strong
And none shall be afraid

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth
Giving a promise of safety and worth

Chorus

Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn
Telling the world that the Savior is born

Chorus

Love is a flame that burns in our heart
Jesus has come and will never depart

Chorus

“Away in a Manger” #149 in the Book of Praise (led by Val and Mary)

John Thomas McFarland | Martin Luther | William James Kirkpatrick

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Away in a manger no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes
I love Thee Lord Jesus look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle 'til morning is nigh

Be near me Lord Jesus I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever and love me I pray
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with Thee there

“Silent night” #154 in the Book of Praise

Franz Xaver Gruber / John Freeman Young / Joseph Mohr

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Silent night holy night
All is calm all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child
Holy Infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night holy night
Shepherds quake at the sight
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heav'nly hosts sing alleluia
Christ the Saviour is born
Christ the Saviour is born

Silent night holy night
Son of God love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord at Thy birth
Jesus Lord at Thy birth

“Joy to the world” #153 in the Book of Praise

George Frideric Handel / Isaac Watts

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Joy to the world the Lord is come
Let earth receive her King
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing
And heav'n and nature sing
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing

Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns
Let us our songs employ
While fields and floods
Rocks hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat repeat the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found
Far as the curse is found
Far as far as the curse is found

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders wonders of His love

Scripture Text: Revelation 5:1-5, 11-14

Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.”

¹¹ Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Luke 2:8-14

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

Meditation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It's no secret that I adore Charlie Brown. I have vowed to someday own a beagle and train it to act like Snoopy. My Peanuts nativity scene and Charlie Brown Christmas tree are prominently displayed in my office, and they give me a smile every time I walk in. On Christmas Eve I will watch "A Charlie Brown Christmas" and likely cry when the kids light up the sad little tree, making it beautiful, singing Hark the Herald Angels Sing. It happens every year.

Of course, the best part of the whole Peanuts Christmas celebration is at the pageant practice, when Charlie Brown cries out in frustration "Doesn't anyone know what Christmas is all about?" Linus takes centre stage and tells the story:

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

He couldn't have told it using anything other than the King James Version.

Throughout Advent we have been reflecting on what it means to be waiting for the Christ Child, and what it means to be waiting for Jesus to come again. In both events, the angels will be praising and inviting us to join them in the joyful chorus.

At his birth they sing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

At his return the angels proclaim, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

No matter when he arrives, the angels proclaim his glory, majesty and power, and sing his praise. We join them with song at his birth, and we will sing his endless praise at his return. Wow, that's an amazing response to a story that has been told for more than 2,000 years!

This year, as we are restricted from gathering for worship in person, we have been missing the joining of our voices in praise. But we are still joined together in our waiting, and in our song. The angels still lead us in our praise, and invite us to join their chorus:

- *Psalm 113:2* Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore.
- *Luke 2:14* "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"
- *Rev. 4:8* "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come."

There are so many ways in which we join our voices with the saints of all times and places, and with the angel chorus to offer endless praise to our God,
the God for whom we wait,
the God for whom we watch,
the God for whom we give thanks and praise.

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, we fill our worship with music that fills our hearts. We still sing the praise of the One who comes to change the world, change our lives, and defeat death forever. We sing as we wait, and we will sing when he arrives. Joy to the world, the Lord is come; let earth receive its King! Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing!

No we aren't gathered in person to join our voices in a corporate hymn of praise and worship, but we can do something else. We can fill something bigger than our sanctuary with the music of the season. We are in locations all over this community, all over the province, and we are singing! We are filling our community with the sound of Christmas hope! Throw open your windows as you worship today, and sing so your neighbours and passers by will hear the joy of Christmas, the peace of Christmas, the love of Christmas.

For these are all gifts to the world that come with the birth of the Child in a manger, and in our hearts. Like the shepherds that heard the angel choir, let our communities hear the choir of believers! It's different from what we hear on the radio or over grocery store sound systems. This is the united voice of those who follow Jesus, those who await his coming, those who mean every word we sing.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”
As we come to the end of the Advent season and embrace the Christmas story once again, let's tell the world what Christmas is about. Let's make this broken world beautiful with the choir of angels, joining our voices to proclaim the One who was, who is, and who is to come.
For lo! The days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth God's promised splendours fling,
and all the world take up the song, which now the angels sing.¹

¹ “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” Vs. 5. #148 in the Book of Praise Words: © public domain.