



Personal Worship 9th January 2022

Call to Worship

Wherever we are in our lives, as we read this, Lord, we pray you will be with us. We make ourselves ready to talk to you and ready to respond when you reply. We calm ourselves and allow your presence to become real. Bless this time, Lord, so that our thoughts and devotions will be pleasing to you, amen.

Hymn Singing the Faith 227, Hymns and Psalms 123, MP 64 “Brightest and Best”

Opening Prayer

Just as the wise m**E**n came to the stable
So we come to **P**raise and worship you.
Just as the Mag**I** brought their precious gifts
So we bring our w**H**ole selves as offerings to you
Just as creation rejoiced **A**t your human birth
So we give tha**N**ks for everything that you mean to us
Christ is revealed! Ma**Y** this truth resound around the world!
Amen

Reading: Luke 3:15-17,21-22

We pause for a moment to reflect on this reading. Do we feel like we are the wheat? Destined for the barn, destined to be milled and refined, to be worked and moulded and destined to sustain and nourish others? Or we do relate more to the chaff? Unworthy and unsuitable; heading towards the waste pile and the unquenchable fire.

We pray –

Lord, sometimes we are not quite what you want us to be, sometimes we don't want to be what you want us to be. Sometimes you challenge us to be one thing, but we choose to be another. Sometimes we are the wheat, sometimes we are the chaff. Sometimes we are worthy and sometimes we are not.

But whatever we feel that we are right now, we know that your love for us is true, and your desire for us to be reclaimed by this love is infinite.

We know that if we come to you in repentance, then you will hear us. We know that if we seek rescue, then you will remind us of Christ's sacrifice. We know that if we ask for help and guidance, then you will send the Spirit to work through us and for us.

Take our days of wheat, Lord, take our weeks of chaff, take all of our lives, and transform them into something that is worthy of being called Christian. Amen.

Hymn Singing the Faith 370, Hymns and Psalms 280, MP 67 "Breath on me, breath of God"

The concept of revelation has become a bit of a mixed bag. On the one hand you've got the Revelations with a big R that come at the back of the Bible and which present us with a description of the end of times – visions of fire, blood, dragons, angels, conflict and suffering that lead to the inevitable triumph of God and the establishment of the eternal kingdom. And on the other hand, you have revelations with a small r that we see every day on the news, in the papers, on Twitter and Insta. Hidden truths and stories that come to light suddenly, that shine a light onto the personal and private life of someone, usually a celebrity or another well known personality. More often than not, these will be something negative or something that undermines the person in some way. Sometimes they will be true and sometimes they might not be. Revelations about Christmas parties in 2020 and about Ghislaine Maxwell, for example, dominated the headlines in December 2021, and there will – no doubt - be fresh stories about someone else in today's news.

The story of the epiphany that has been celebrated this week and the story from the Gospel reading that we will have heard today, both talk of a different kind of revelation. Something that was just as transformational but something that was more personal and more relatable to us. Revelations with a big R can seem hard to understand or apply to our daily experiences. The revelations about pop stars and politicians interest us but they might as well be from a different planet for all the practical applications we can draw from them. The revelations to the magi, however, and to the followers of John the Baptist are so much

more relevant to us, because we have lived exactly the same revelation in our own lives.

The revelation that Christ is not just a story, that Christ is not just a prediction for the distant future, the revelation that Christ is not just a theory – the revelation that Christ is real and that our salvation is real and has been gifted to us. The magi researched and studied, and then travelled hundreds of miles to have this revelation made real to them. The crowds listening to John had to put aside their ideas about him and remain faithful to the revelation that this other young man was actually the one that they were waiting for. This young man who did not come with instant glory and visible power, this young man who humbled himself to be baptised by John, this young man who would then preach a message of love and salvation rather than revenge and punishment. He was the one, he was the actual Messiah – long promised and finally here!

Many of us can probably relate to this because we will have had similar moments of revelation with Christ. There will have been times when we have studied the bible and listened to preaching, and we have been blessed with an insight. A eureka moment, where a particular question or issue comes – finally – into sharp focus. There will also have been times when a sudden glimpse of the power of the spirit shines into our lives like the opening of heaven and the descending dove mentioned in the Luke reading. These revelations remind us that Christ is not just a Christmas story, or a prediction about the future, that Christ is alive and working in our lives right now, and his promise of salvation is something that directly impacts everything we do, every moment of our lives.

We should cherish, and share, and celebrate these moments of revelation, and find ways to create opportunities for further revelations in our lives. Sadly, searching the gossip pages for revelations about pop stars is probably not the best way to experience Christ. Prayer. Reflection. Good Works. Christian Fellowship. Asking God questions. Putting time aside to focus on God. These are just some of the ways that we can create opportunities for God to reveal His truth and Her purpose in our lives. Let us embrace these opportunities and embrace all that God wants to share with us.

Prayer of intercession

Lord, we bring our emotional prayers of intercession to you now. We put to one side the transactional, the lists of assumptions and instructions, the boxes to be ticked, and we simply bring all of those that we know who are in need at this time. We bring them to you, and we cry out in love that you will bless them and grant them the gifts that they need at this time.

For those who need to feel your healing touch. We pray for them, and our hearts ache because we want them to be renewed.

For those who need your words of wisdom. We pray for them, not to follow our advice, but to be able to understand your path and your answers to their questions.

For those who need companionship in their lives. We pray for them, so that where we cannot fill a need, your presence will be there.

For those who are struggling to get by. We pray for them and we pray that compassion will fill our hearts and the hearts of all who have been richly blessed in life, so that we may all know how best to share and give of ourselves.

For those who are facing problems that are beyond their capacity to endure and beyond our ability to resolve. For those facing persecution, war, natural disasters and repression. May the power of the spirit given them hope, and confidence that nothing of this world may keep them from you in the next.

We bring all of these prayers to you now, Lord. Amen.

Hymn Singing the Faith 412, Hymns and Psalms 781 “See how great a flame aspires”

We pray for each other, that in our dispersed fellowship, we will all have a grace filled week, full of God’s blessings and power. Amen.