

## THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES: Telephone Service for Sunday 20th December 2020 – Fourth Sunday of Advent

*If you have a candle perhaps you would like to light it as we in church light our fourth advent candle; and so we Pray*

Lord Jesus Christ, Light of the world, when Gabriel brought good news to Mary of your birth, she believed his word; Bless your church, preparing for Christmas, and your children, who long for your coming, with the same gift of faith and joy that Mary showed. Jesus, Light of the world, shine on us we pray. **Amen**  
May the peace and joy of the Lord be with you. **And also with you**

### **CONFESSION**

*As we come into God's presence we confess our faults and failings with the words of King David in Ps 51*

Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sins.

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy**

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

### **ABSOLUTION**

May Almighty God, who sent his Son into the world to save sinners, bring us pardon and peace, now and for ever.

**Amen**

### **THE COLLECT** *(special prayer for today)*

Heavenly Father, who chose the blessed virgin Mary to be the mother of the promised Saviour; fill us your servants with your grace, that in all things we embrace your holy will and with her rejoice in your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **OLD TESTAMENT READINGS** *2 Samuel 7:1-11,16*

1. Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around,
2. that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains."
3. Then Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."
4. But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying,
5. "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?"
6. "For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle.
7. "Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"
8. "Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel.
9. "And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth.
10. "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously,
11. "since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.
16. "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."

**NEW TESTAMENT READING** *Romans 16:25-end*

25. Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began  
26. but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—  
27. to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

**THE GOSPEL** *Luke 1:26-38*

26. Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,  
27. to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.  
28. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"  
29. But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.  
30. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.  
31. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.  
32. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.  
33. "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."  
34. Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"  
35. And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.  
36. "Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.  
37. "For with God nothing will be impossible."  
38. Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her

**REFLECTION**

Do you remember that old song, sung by Doris Day: 'Secret Love'?

Once I had a secret love that lived within the heart of me;  
All too soon my secret love became impatient to be free'  
Now I shout it from the highest hills, even told the golden daffodils;  
At last my heart's an open door and my secret love's no secret anymore '  
Usually secrets aren't for sharing. Joseph, finding Mary 'with child' decided to put Mary away secretly.  
Some secrets are kept for sharing at the right moment. Despite children's urgent questions about what they will be getting for Christmas, Christmas secrets are for sharing on Christmas day.  
Did you know that God has secrets? *The secret things belong to the Lord.* That is until he reveals them to *those who fear him* says Deuteronomy 29:29  
Paul often calls God's secrets 'mysteries', as in Romans 16:25 where he says *The gospel/the good news... [is] a mystery kept secret since the world began.*  
God's greatest mystery/secret, waiting to be revealed at the right time, was Jesus. That's why Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia *At the right time God sent his Son, to be born of a woman. How can this be?* Mary asked, and Gabriel shared with her the mysterious secret. *With God nothing is impossible. The Holy Spirit will come upon you.*  
God's big secret, that we are getting ready for during Advent, is Jesus.  
This is the time for God's secret to be shouted from the highest hills.  
In the Bible we see God's hidden secrets revealed to his servants.

-To **David**, through Nathan the prophet, God revealed that he had a future for him, the nation of Israel, and the world

God promised that he would build a house, a throne & a personal relationship with David through 'his seed' called 'The Son of David'

-To **Mary**, through the prophetic word of the Angel Gabriel, God revealed that he had a future for her, for Israel and the world, that she would bear a son - called *Son of David* and *Son of God*. Jesus the Saviour

Jesus would be the cornerstone of God's house; and David's throne would be his. He will *reign in righteousness and justice throughout the world*, promised Gabriel

-To **Us** Paul prophetically prays in Romans *Now to Him who is able to **establish** you... according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret but revealed in the prophetic Scriptures* What a promise for our uncertain days!

God's secret plan is: to sort us, to settle us, and to secure us ..... and do it all **in Jesus!**

God promises **us** through Jesus the 'certain hope' that he promised to David, *a house and a kingdom established and secured forever*. Is this how we see our future? How do our securities match up?

As a youngster I sang: *I've got a home in glory land, that outshines the sun...* Praise God as committed Christians we have securities in Jesus that are eternal. They do not devalue or disappear

-How sad, after Grenfell, to hear a woman on TV in a similar high rise tower saying, 'I spent all my money buying a lease for this flat, and now I can't sell it, or stay in it. All my assets and securities have gone.'

-How heart wrenching to hear people recount their hopes for the future in retirement, then to listen to them as they cry: 'but now, Covid has taken my partner and my future.'

How wonderful to have securities that don't disappear like a puff of smoke; and securities that don't die on us.

Gabriel said to Mary in her uncertain circumstances: *Rejoice, the Lord is with you. Behold, you **will** conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS (Saviour). He **will** be great, & **will** be called the Son of the Highest (the Supreme One); and the Lord God **will** give Him the throne of His father David. and He **will** reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there **will** be no end.*

Christ is Supreme and Sovereign over all situations, and is our Security. This is God's Christmas secret, his present for us all. It is: the person of Jesus, and the promise of security in him.

God's secrets are not just for us to celebrate but to share. For many people Christmas and Christianity is still all a 'mystery'. However, in Jesus, the mystery is now an open secret for all to see.

So with Paul we can join in saying: *Now to Him who is able to establish you (you, me, and everyone who turns to him) ... to this God, who alone is wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen*

As we welcome Jesus into our hearts and rely on him, we can rejoice in God's secret rescue plans 'in Christ' and sing for all to hear: *Joy to the world, the Lord is come*

## **DECLARATION**

*Let us joyfully declare our faith in God, saying together*

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named**

**We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high**

**We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

*And so, in the presence of Christ, we pray*

Thank you gracious God that in Christ you revealed yourself to the world as God with us, one with our humanity  
Help us to identify with all those in need, and care as you care for us

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Thank you gracious God that in Christ you liberated the oppressed and judged their oppressors

Guide the leaders of the nations to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with you our God.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Thank you gracious God that in Christ you fed the hungry with good things

Help those suffering from drought, famine, homelessness, the survivors of Grenfell, those with Covid, and many other ailments, and bless those who bring aid to them nationally and internationally

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Thank you gracious God that in Christ you are establishing a house of faith and the Kingdom of God  
Help all bishops, priests and deacons to preach the good news of generous grace, and form your church into a  
people of living faith who shine as lights in the darkness.

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Thank you gracious God that in Christ you revealed yourself as the one who holds the keys of life and death, and of  
sickness and health. Bless the sick and suffering, those who are dying, and those surrounded by death, to find in you  
help for this life and hope for eternity

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Thank you God in Christ you give your people what they need, not what they deserve. Help us to find all our needs  
met in Jesus our Lord, the One with whom nothing is impossible. To this end open our hearts to saying: 'Come Lord  
Jesus, you are welcome.'

Lord in your mercy **hear our prayer**

*We gather all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus taught us*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen**

*Finally we pray God's blessing on each other*

**The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; May he turn his face  
towards us, and give us peace. Amen**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us, and those  
whom we love and pray for, this day and for evermore. **Amen**

**Song – Joy to the world**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30OaM6b48k8&vl=en>