

KINGS NORTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Christmas Day

Friday 25th December 2020 10:30 am

Popular readings

Subject	Reference	Bible Page
The light is coming	Isaiah 9:1-7	693
The ruler to be born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2-5a	933
Gabriel appears to Zechariah	Luke 1:5-25	1025
Gabriel comes to Mary	Luke 1:26-39	1026
The Angel speaks to Joseph	Matt 1:18-25	965
Mary's song	Luke 1:46-55	1026
Zechariah song	Luke 1:67-79	1027
The birth of Jesus	Luke 2:1-7	1027
The Shepherds and the angels	Luke 2:8-14	1027
The shepherds visit Bethlehem	Luke 2:14-20	1028
The visit of the Magi	Matt 2:1-12	966
Escape to Egypt	Matt 2:13-23	966
Jesus presented at the temple	Luke 2:21-24	1028
Simeon	Luke 2:25-32	1028
Mary and Joseph	Luke 2:33-35	1028
Anna	Luke 2:36-40	1028
Jesus went around doing good	Acts 10:34-43	1105

Carols

Mission Praise

- MP 47 Away in a manger
- MP 83 Come and join the celebration
- MP 211 Hark the Herald Angels sing
- MP 114 Ding dong merrily on high
- MP 342 Infant Holy Infant Lowly
- MP 337 In the Bleak Midwinter
- MP 393 Joy to the World (3)
- MP 491 O come all ye faithful
- MP 493 O Come, O come, Emmanuel
- MP 503 O little town of Bethlehem
- MP 539 Once in Royal David's City
- MP 589 See him lying on a bed of straw
- MP 597 Silent night Holy Night
- MP 644 The First Nowell
- MP 764 While Shepherds watched their flocks by night.
- MP 767 Who is He, in yonder stall, ..

Exordium

In our culture, our long tradition of Christmas has been made it something of beauty. The decorations and coloured lights are set against the dark evenings, snow, if not real is there on the country scenes on cards and on cakes. There is the special Christmas dinner.

[Last year a survey in a supermarket asked those buying Brussel sprouts whether they liked them, almost everyone said no, some strongly so!](#)

[Yesterday filling up the car I asked the Muslim attendant what she would be having tomorrow – yes they would be having sprouts too! I doubt there is anything more contrary to the Pakistani palette!](#)

If not sprouts then music - Radio stations probably feel the same when they play “so here it is merry Christmas everybody’s having fun”. Whether it is Noddy Holder, Sir Cliff or the Radio 3 Christmas ‘series’ This established Christmas tradition is a welcome distraction as the long winter sets in.

Add to this the most remarkably story - the appearance of angels loudly heralding the arrival of the king –one born in the humblest of circumstances

and making himself first known to the poor shepherds who with contagious enthusiasm to go off and tell the world of what they have seen.

I'm preaching to the choir - You know all of this, there is plenty in the gospel accounts we could be focusing on.

Today, however, let's look at **Zechariah's** song found in Lk 1:67-79. Read it Although Jesus' coming and the reason for it is everywhere in Scripture - most couldn't see it. The prophets of the past longed to look into the time and circumstances of Christ's promised coming into this world. Like one of those special pictures that suddenly click – so the truth of this event is hidden from our dark hearts – unless God reveals it – which he did that day to Zechariah.

“⁶⁷ **His father** (that is John the Baptist's father) **Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:** in other words he spoke of God, the Spirit of God bringing the truth of God.

The first phrase explains why Jesus came, *why Christmas* – ⁶⁸ **"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.** The last phrase to what end he came **to guide our feet into the path of peace."**

✚ The rest is who he is, - how he will do it - and what that means for those he does it for.

We are not going to go through word by word, profitable though would be, as each stone is turned there are treasures to be had.

We start with rescue, that is what redeem means. He rescues to **enable us to serve**, 'saved to serve', never forget if Christ has saved you I am **s-to serve**!

He has to rescue from something before we can be useful to Him.

A servant would be pretty useless if he was still handcuffed or chained.

It is my heart that is chained - First he has to release me from that - How can he do this? Because he is powerful that is what 'horn' means, ⁶⁹ **He has raised up a horn of salvation for us.**

Now who does he release us from? We have ⁷¹ **salvation from our enemies.**

This is mentioned again **and from the hand of all who hate us—** and again ⁷⁴ **to rescue us from the hand of our enemies.**

✚ So please with me stop for a moment to think “who or what are my enemies” x2 stop to think for a moment.

2a

OK let me turn it around the other way - the purpose God made you and I is to be like Jesus Christ, the perfect Godly man, He is the example of how a perfect life is to be lived. Thus we read in ^{v75} to live **in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.** In other words, a Christ-like life.

So what is hindering you from giving all your heart, all your love, all your effort, and giving your money and everything else to his untiring service?

So what enemy do you have? Who or what hinders you? Someone chained is not free to serve. Who/what has chained you? What is stopping you living as you should and were made to? That then is the enemy.

There you have it. My insecurity, my dullness, my lack of vision, my self-centeredness, the persuasive contrary message of those around. The hardness of choosing God's way over my own way... and so on....

✚ Like a vast army - arranged against me living as I should be living.

What kind of enemies are these? Is there a spirit of dullness? Is there a spirit of insecurity? No but we do have an enemy who produces this in people.

In the earlier days the enemies of God's people where their aggressive neighbours who constantly wanted to control the country by force.

These ungodly neighbours worshipped false gods. Their pagan deities desired to ensnare God's people so they no longer trusted in the true God – but rather looked to these idols. Behind these false gods are demons who promise the world - but actually hinder and hurt.

So what should I do? We don't attack our neighbouring countries – (we might make an exception with France!)

Our enemy is invisible but none the less real.

■ There has been such an onslaught of cyber-attacks these last few weeks on the US (and UK) (if the stolen files were printed out = paper 1500ft high) they say it is equivalent of declaring war.

The first enemy is the devil, though invisible he is real, he is called the accuser, he likes to find fault (as do his followers - that is how you spot them). He knows God's Holiness, he sees your failure and he says “God consider him/her guilty” God because you are Holy and because you are Just, you must punish - you cannot bless lawbreakers”

That's right - all are trapped, chained - unless - unless

2b

Here's the central point of 'Why Christmas' That Christ came into this world to release / to redeem. Paul said **Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners** 1Ti 1:15 - And so enable the Holy God to bless unholy undeserving sinners It is at the cross that the release fee was paid; the cost? The perfect life of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, his good life was given up as if it was bad - so that my bad life can be considered good. (<transfer>). This is how I am rescued from judgment and eternal punishment.

The history of the world is replete with rescue missions.

In 1857 during the Indian mutiny the residency at Lucknow is under siege. The English soldiers and their families are held captive, holed-up, they looked out forlornly for a rescuer. One day they hear the sound of bagpipes - what joy there is when Scottish troops come into sight and relieve the desperate remnant. How they had longed for it.

A lovely picture - only that doesn't apply to me and Christ. Christ died while we were still hostile, - **he loved me, he was for me - while I am against him.**

■ I remember one person at BCM saying he saw two people fighting in the street one man was beating up another so he stopped the car and came to the defense of the victim. When he started in they both, they both turned and attacked him.

This is the amazing thing about God's intervention into this world Christ came to die for those who were against him.

Can you imagine a rescuer coming and you stay **in your cell** and don't want to be freed! How foolish - but Christ did not come for the wise but fools.

The first enemy he deals with is the Devil who keeps me away from God.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Col 2:15

Christ in satisfying what God required of me through the giving of himself neutered, nullified the accusers taunt.

Through Christ I am accepted by God the father, all His righteous requirements being satisfied by Christ on the cross – forever!

Jesus came into this world **“to preach good news to the poor. ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,”** Lu 4:18

3a

Secondly now I am Justified / that is right with God - He can give me his Spirit - I can have that urgently needed renewed heart – a heart to love God. He the indwelling Spirit of God confirms that I am a true follower of Christ. How can I see someone is truly converted? In their person they are different - inside. They now hate the things they used to love - and now love the God whose Lordship they had long resisted.

■ How does love show, you cannot hide it, it's enthusiasm, zeal.

Christ coming into this world and giving me a new heart and new direction is a work done by God in me. It means I now desire Christ above all else. He **enables me to serve him without fear.** No fear of Judgment, for Christ has paid for me – means I am **enabled**, free to serve. Yes **saved to serve**

in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. – how can I ?

Lastly Christ's ongoing presence means I have His power, not my power, but his power over all those fleshly desires and things mentioned earlier, self-centeredness, laziness, always wanting to follow the world's easier way as those around do. Now I can be different - and confident. That is why Christ came. **Jesus Christ, gave himself to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”** He brings grace and more grace **which enables me to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** Tit 2:10-14 That is the way of Joy

How does this show? – in desire and in action - I can leave my warm home to visit someone because he enables you to. I can switch off the TV and phone and read wholesome Godly books (of which there are many) and are good for your soul - because He enables you to. I can be patient with that person because he enables me to. I can forgive, and not keep a record of wrongs, because he enables me to. I can love those around me because he enables me to.

Do you want to give up that old way for something much better? Then turn from darkness and the light of Christ will shine on you. That is why Christ came. **77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender MERCY (Com) of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”** Lu 1:67-79 end

3b