

KINGS NORTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Sunday 22nd December 2024 6:30 pm

Carols by Candlelight

Candlelight21.ppt

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Welcome -

Carol *Once in Royal David's City* (6)

Reading 1 Micah 5:2-5a (2 slides)

Light candles 1,2,3rd, 4th *Advent candles* Hope, Peace, Love, Joy

Prayer –

Carol *In the Bleak Midwinter* (4)

Reading 2 Isaiah 9:1-7 (4 slides)

Christmas video *Nativity*

Carol *The First Nowell* (4 no gaps)

Reading 3 Luke 2:8-18 (2 slides)

Carol *Silent Night*

Video 2

Reading 4 John 1:1-14

Carol *See him lying on a bed of straw* (4)

Message - Francis

Carol *Joy to the World* (3)

Prayer _____ End

Message - I hope you have enjoyed singing the carols. The word Carol comes from the old French word Carole meaning a song to accompany dancing! The dancing bit seems to have been left off, at least tonight. Carols were adopted as we have them as a way of putting into words the great truths behind Christmas. Never has that been more necessary than today. Christmas is as far removed from the historic birth of Jesus as it could possibly be. Christmas is being replaced with ‘the festive season’

Our nativity set is another way that the reality of this birth is brought to us; the humbles circumstances of the stable, the poor shepherds being given the bright sign in the sky and being the first to be told of His birth. “Go and you will find Jesus lying in a manger” they were told.

Then there’s the wise men? Why are they there? They shouldn’t really be there for they came to see Jesus when he was living in a house - probably a year later. However, it’s a way of drawing together all the events surrounding his birth.

We can learn from these wise men. They were astrologers and mentioned in the book of Daniel in the OT. They were the sages of old.

They searched the sky seeking to hear from God, they looked for a sign of hope, - they looked up.

I wonder if that is why you are here this evening. You haven't thought about it like that, you haven't used those words. But maybe that's the reason. Maybe you think 'I like the carols', or 'I have come to church this evening for it adds something, it makes Christmas a more wholesome'. Yet, I wonder, is there an inkling that there's something more for me here?

These wise men were enquirers, their life was a life of searching. They, along with many of the religions of the world then, - as now - were and still are looking and expecting someone to come. The Jewish Messiah, the Sufi Mardi, the New Age Teacher. It is part of our human hope. There's a longing for a future, better age.

There's a yearning in the soul of every human heart. Perhaps that has prompted you to be here. There's a longing.

A man called Korah expressed what many people have felt, this is what he said: **As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night.** Psalm 42:1-3a

Did you notice that in those couple of lines God is mentioned three times?

As we have a natural thirst for water, so we all have a spiritual thirst, this is what marks us out as human, we are more than flesh or blood - and we thirst for something more. We need that living water that satisfies.

Jesus said to a woman at a well **"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."** Joh 4:10-14

So too with bread, Jesus said **Man cannot live on bread alone.**

We do need bread, it's important. The material world is full of things which are good, which provide and help us. Good food is pleasurable. A beautiful country scene is pleasurable. An exciting experience in sport or adventure is pleasurable. And yet, and yet, what Jesus said is so true, we cannot live off it. We can exist, we can carry on, but we can't live by it.

We do need bread, and bread can satisfy – up to a point – but we will be hungry again. The things of this world can, to some point satisfy, but it doesn't last. Life almost works, and yet it never can, no material thing in this world can satisfy our hunger for spiritual reality

Jesus is quoting from the OT centuries before when God was addressing people in the desert: **Man cannot live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**

In the desert they had nothing. The Lord had brought them there so they could see that they had nothing. They could not say 'I am OK'. They could not say 'I am self-sufficient I can look after myself', no they were there so they would know they could not rely on themselves. It was impossible to rely on themselves, without help they would die. What they could rely on, and only on, - were the promises of God, a God who promised to provide for them if they would only put their trust in him.

Would they trust him, as a child trusts?

This world for all its riches - is a spiritual desert. x2

To us with our plenty of good food and drink, with all the endless entertainments, with our devices and impressive tech, Jesus declares **a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.** Isn't He telling us the truth of the matter?

Soon we will watch many around the world gathered for the New Year's Eve firework celebrations.

I know the atmosphere, I know the sense of expectation and of hope that seeing in the New Year brings, I know because I was one of them. For a number of years, I joined the crowds packed into Trafalgar Square.

- I remember the occasion when a couple of friends and I turned up with two or three gallons of fairly liquid for the fountains to froth things up a bit. They are switched off now.

But one year is really like another, we remain in the desert of this world.

For those in the desert ahead for them was the promised land, the Lord would take them there if they trusted in Him. The promised land would be their eternal home, a place of peace and safety, a land of good things, a land flowing with milk and honey. Now we do not have the promised land, but the promised Son. It is in Him, the promised Son in whom we find our eternal home. Jesus is the land, the Land is Jesus.

St. Augustine said in the fourth century: "We are travellers on a journey without a fixed abode; on our way, not yet in our native land" –

That is what we as God's creation are made for. In Ecclesiastes we are reminded that God **"has set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end"**. Ec 3:11

The result is an unsettled, hungering, a hungering and searching.

Philip said to Jesus **"Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied."**

- A rather gloomy German philosopher of the last century, SCHOPENHAUER was once walking in Berlin and inadvertently wandered into the palace gardens. He was soon accosted by a guard who asked, "Who are you? Why are you here? ", Lost in his own deep thoughts, Schopenhauer replied, - "I wish to God someone would tell me!" Anyone else would have given his name and accounted for the unintended trespass, but Schopenhauer's answer to the astonished guard was really to do with the perennial questions, 'Who am I?' Questions that have haunted humanity throughout history, and confront us still"

Again Augustine is right when he says **"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you."** *Confessions*

We need our daily bread, we should ask God for it and thank Him for it. But to the soul sick **Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life"**. Joh 6:35, 6:48

As we look on this newborn infant in the cradle, there before us **a child is born, and a son given.**

He is he said: **the true bread that has come down from heaven.**

Have this bread and you will live. x2

But it's not automatic. When Jesus fed the five thousand those afterwards looked for him because they ate and had their fill, they were impressed. To them Jesus said: **"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you."** Joh 6:27.... and you will have it, if you desire Holiness – but that means forsaking self.

Syria as a nation had lived under tyranny – now we share Syria's excitement at their freedom – but will it last?

The Lord Jesus said we all live under a tyranny, the tyranny of self and sin. Sin holds us all captive. A Holy God can have no direct dealings with us as we are – He holds us all at a distance.

This Son - born into this world is His answer. This Son was born to die - and Oh what a death, what rejection, what pain, what torture.

This suffering servant died on that cross to obey His Father's eternal plan. He took the sin of others - onto himself. **He who had no sin became sin**, taking it to Himself and bore it away. so that you and I can be considered righteous in the sight of God. This great gift of Christ's righteousness is to the underserving. Those who are self-righteous will never look to Him.

But the hungry in heart, the humble in heart can come as a beggar to Christ. Risen from the grave He calls us, beckoning us to come and receive the bread of life. He says: **He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.** Joh 6:35.

I wonder who here tonight will do that?

The James Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* has the theme song with the words **"We Have All the Time in the World"** – we don't. x2

Let us finish with the words of our late queen as she spoke on Christmas in 2011. "God sent into the world a unique person - neither a philosopher nor a general, important though they are, but a Saviour, with the power to forgive. Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.

In the last verse of this beautiful carol, O Little Town Of Bethlehem, there's a prayer: *O Holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us we pray.*

Cast out our sin, And enter in. Be born in us today.

It was her prayer, as it is our prayer, that today you will find your peace, and rest, and life in Him, once in a manger, He is the Lord of Glory. **END**

金斯諾頓浸信會教堂

2024 年 12 月 22 日星期日下午 6:30

燭光頌歌 Candlelight21.ppt

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歡迎 -

卡蘿曾經在大衛城 (6)

讀彌迦書 1 5:2-5a (2 張幻燈片)

點燃蠟燭 1、2、3、4 降臨節蠟燭 希望、和平、愛、喜悅

禱告

寒冬中的頌歌 (4)

讀以賽亞書 9:1-7 (4 張幻燈片)

聖誕節耶穌降生視頻

卡羅爾第一諾威爾 (4 無間隙)

讀 3 路加福音 2:8-18 (2 張投影片)

平安夜卡羅爾

影片 2

讀約翰四書 1:1-14

卡蘿看到他躺在一張稻草床上 (4)

訊息 - 弗朗西斯

卡羅爾歡樂世界 (3)

禱告 _____ 結束

訊息-我希望您喜歡唱頌歌。

「Carol」這個字源自於古老的法文單字Carole, 意為伴隨舞蹈的歌曲！至少今晚, 舞蹈部分似乎已經停止了。

我們採用聖誕頌歌來表達聖誕節背後的偉大真理。今天這一點比以往任何時候都更加必要。聖誕節與耶穌誕生的歷史距離可能是最遙遠的。聖誕節被「節慶季」取代

我們的誕生場景是向我們展示誕生的現實的另一種方式；馬厩的簡陋環境，可憐的牧羊人得到了天空中明亮的標誌，並第一個被告知他的誕生。有人告訴他們：“去吧，你會發現耶穌躺在馬槽裡。”

那麼還有智者嗎？他們為什麼在那裡？他們實際上不應該在那裡，因為當他們來見耶穌時，耶穌還住在一所房子裡——可能是一年後。然而，這是將所有圍繞他出生的事件串聯起來的一種方式。

我們可以向這些智者學習。他們是占星家，在舊約的但以理書中被提及。他們是古代的聖人。

他們仰望天空，希望聽到上帝的聲音，他們尋找希望的跡象——他們抬起頭來。

我不知道這是否是您今晚來這裡的原因。你還沒有這樣想過，你還沒有用過這些字。但或許這就是原因。也許你會想“我喜歡聖誕頌歌”，或者“我今晚來教會是因為它增添了一些東西，使聖誕節更有意義”。然而，我想知道，這裡是否有跡象表明我能得到更多的東西？

這些智者是探究者，他們的一生就是探索的一生。他們，以及當時世界上的許多宗教，就像現在一樣，都在尋找和期待某人的到來。猶太救世主、蘇菲派信徒、新時代導師。這是我們人類希望的一部分。人們渴望未來，渴望更美好的時代。

每個人的心靈深處都有一種渴望。也許這促使你來到這裡。有一種渴望。

一個叫可拉的人表達了許多人的感受，他說過這樣的話：神啊，我的心切慕你，如鹿切慕溪水。我的靈魂渴望上帝，渴望活著的上帝。我什麼時候可以去見上帝？日夜以淚水作為我的食物。詩篇 42:1-3a

您是否注意到，在這幾行詩句中，上帝被提到了三次？

正如我們天生渴望水一樣，我們所有人都有精神上的渴望，這就是我們作為人類的標誌，我們不僅僅是血肉之軀——我們渴望更多的東西。我們需要那令人滿足的活水。

耶穌對井邊的一個女人說：「如果你知道上帝的恩賜，知道是誰向你要水喝，你早求他，他也早給了你活水。凡喝這水的人還要再渴。

「人若喝我所賜的水，就永遠不渴。我所賜的水要在他裡頭成為泉源，直湧到永生。」約翰福音 4:10-14

耶穌也說過，關於麵包，人不能單靠麵包活著。

我們確實需要麵包，它很重要。物質世界充滿了美好的事物，它們為我們提供並幫助我們。美食讓人愉悅。美麗的鄉村風光讓人心曠神怡。運動或冒險中的激動人心的經歷是令人愉快的。然而，然而，耶穌說的話是如此真實，我們不能靠它生活。我們可以生存，可以延續，但我們不能靠它生活。

我們確實需要麵包，而且麵包可以在某種程度上滿足我們的需要，但我們也會再次感到飢餓。世間的萬物在某種程度上能夠讓人滿足，但卻不會持久。生活幾乎可以正常運轉，但它永遠無法正常運轉，世界上沒有任何物質可以滿足我們對精神現實的渴望

耶穌引用了上帝在沙漠中對人說話時幾個世紀前的舊約經文：人活著不能單靠食物，乃是靠上帝口裡所出的一切話。

在沙漠中他們一無所有。上帝把他們帶到那裡是為了讓他們看見自己一無所有。他們無法說『我很好』。他們不能說‘我能自給自足，我能照顧好自己’，不，他們在那裡是為了讓她們知道他們不能依靠自己。他們不可能依靠自己，如果沒有幫助他們就會死。他們唯一可以依靠的是上帝的承諾，上帝承諾只要他們信任他，他就會為他們提供幫助。

他們會像孩子一樣信任他嗎？

這個世界儘管充滿財富，卻是一片精神沙漠。 x2

對於我們這些擁有大量美食美酒、無盡娛樂、各種設備和令人印象深刻的科技的人來說，耶穌宣稱，人的生命並不在於擁有多少財富。他不是告訴我們事情的真相嗎？

很快我們將看到世界各地的人們聚集在一起慶祝跨年煙火。

我知道那種氣氛，我知道新年帶來的期待和希望，我知道，因為我就是他們中的一員。多年來，我一直和人群擠在特拉法加廣場。

我記得有一次我和幾個朋友帶著兩三加侖的液體來給噴泉加一點泡沫。它們現在已關閉。

但歲月真的就像另一年，我們仍然在這世界的沙漠中。

對那些身處沙漠的人來說，前方就是應許之地，只要他們信任主，主就會帶他們去那裡。應許之地將是他們永恆的家園，一個和平與安全的地方，一個充滿美好事物的土地，一個流著牛奶和蜂蜜的土地。如今我們所得到的不是應許之地，而是應許之子。正是在他，這位應許之子裡面，我們找到了永恆的家。耶穌是土地，土地就是耶穌。

聖奧斯定在四世紀曾說：「我們都是旅人，沒有固定的住所；我們在路上，還沒有回到故土。」——

這就是我們作為上帝創造物的意義。傳道書中提醒我們，上帝「將永生安置在世人心裡；但他們不能理解上帝從頭到尾所做的一切。傳 3:11

結果是不安、飢渴、飢渴和探索。

腓力對耶穌說：“主啊，請將父顯給我們看，我們就知足了。”

叔本華是上個世紀一位頗為憂鬱的德國哲學家，有一次他在柏林散步，無意中誤入了宮殿花園。不久，一名警衛攔住他，問道：“你是誰？你為什麼在這裡？”陷入沉思中的叔本華回答道：“我希望上帝能有人告訴我！”任何其他人都會說出他的名字並解釋這次無意的侵入，但叔本華對驚訝的警衛的回答實際上與永恆的問題有關：“我是誰？”這些問題在整個歷史中一直困擾著人類，並且仍然擺在我們面前”

奧古斯丁說得再對不過了，“主啊，你為自己創造了我們，我們的心永遠不會安寧，除非在你裡面找到安息。”懺悔錄

我們需要每天的食糧，我們應該向上帝祈求並感謝祂。但對生病的靈魂，耶穌說：「我就是生命的糧。」約翰福音 6:35, 6:48

當我們看著搖籃裡的新生兒時，我們面前有一個孩子誕生了，一個兒子誕生了。

他說，他是從天上降下來的真正的麵包。

吃了這麵包就會活下去。 x2

但它不是自動的。當耶穌餵飽五千人時，人們因為吃飽了而來找他，他們對此印象深刻。耶穌對他們說：“不要為那必壞的食物勞作，要為那存到永生的食物勞作，就是人子要賜給你們的。”約翰福音 6:27...如果你渴望聖潔，你就會擁有它——但這意味著放棄自我。

敘利亞作為一個國家曾經生活在暴政之下——現在我們和敘利亞一樣為獲得自由而興奮——但是這種情況會持續下去嗎？

主耶穌說，我們都活在暴政之下，自我和罪惡的暴政之下。罪惡束縛著我們每一個人。神聖的上帝無法直接與我們打交道——祂與我們保持距離。

這個兒子——降生到這個世界就是祂的答案。這個兒子生來就是為了死——哦，這是怎樣的死亡，怎樣的拒絕，怎樣的痛苦，怎樣的折磨。

這位受苦的僕人死在十字架上是為了遵守祂父的永恆計畫。他把別人的罪都歸咎於自己。他本無罪，卻成了罪孽，將罪孽歸於自己，並帶走。這樣你和我就可以在上帝眼中被視為公義的人。基督的正義這偉大的禮物是賜給那些不值得的人。自以為是的人永遠不會仰望他。

但心裡飢餓的人、心裡謙卑的人可以像乞丐一樣來到基督面前。祂從墳墓中復活，呼喚我們，招手讓我們前來領取生命的麵包。他說：到我這裡來的，必定不餓；信我的，永遠不渴。約翰福音 6:35。

我不知道今晚在場的誰會做這件事？

詹姆斯龐德系列電影《女王密使》的主題曲是「我們擁有世界上所有的時間」——但我們卻沒有。
x2

讓我們以已故女王在2011

年聖誕節的演講中的話來結束我們的演講。一位救世主，他有寬恕的力量。寬恕是基督教信仰的核心。它可以治癒破碎的家庭，可以恢復友誼，可以調解分裂的社區。正是在寬恕中，我們感受到上帝之愛的力量。

在這首美麗的頌歌《伯利恆小鎮》的最後一節中，有一段祈禱詞：伯利恆的聖嬰啊，請您降臨到我們身邊。

驅逐我們的罪孽，然後進入。

這是她的祈禱，也是我們的祈禱，今天您將在馬槽裡找到您的平安、安息和生命，祂是榮耀之主。

結尾