

ALTON BAPTIST CHURCH

e-Service

Sunday 13 December 2020

Advent

God's plan announced

Welcome

We hope you will be greatly blessed as I have been during the preparation in the way our Lord leads and guides us all.

So, wherever you are you, in His house, or in your home, or elsewhere, we will know of His love and presence; as neither COVID-19 nor Boris can separate us from the love of our God.

Opening Prayer

O Lord we ask that you give us open minds and hearts as we come to You at this time of worship with You and others. That you will strengthen our believe in You as we listen to the YouTube videos, read your Word, speak with you in our prayers and as we consider what Your Word has to say to us to encourage and enrich our lives.

Our 1st hymn

Glory to God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMj7Aprgvjk>

Readings for today

The birth of Jesus foretold

Luke 1

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

³⁴'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

³⁵The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷For no word from God will ever fail.'

³⁸'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

2nd hymn

O come let us adore Him

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIj6wtHN21s>

Intercessory Prayers

- ✚ Our previous minister Chris and his wife Ruth are both ill she following a severe stroke. We pray that Our Lord in knowing their wishes - His will be done.**
- ✚ By the time you read this and we meet the answer to the question of whether we have a trade agreement with the EU may be known. As we have prayed before that Your will be done.**
- ✚ Guidance for our civic leaders as they navigate the best path during this COVID-19 pandemic and our relations with the EU.**
- ✚ Guidance for our spiritual leaders to have boldness of action that COVID-19 will not overwhelm their thoughts and actions.**
- ✚ Safety for those of our 'emergency services' / NHS *et al*, that they are kept safe from COVID-19 and physical attacks by people.**
- ✚ I am sure some other national / world / local matter will turn up between now and Sunday.**

3rd hymn

While shepherds watched

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSyUvOUZwxQ>

Let us look at His word.

Whenever we come to the Christmas Story, for many of us, it is familiar as we've heard it many times before and there's often little or no new material that we haven't heard before. However, there is I am sure something new we can look at that is relevant to our Christian lives. The Holy Spirit guided me to the aspect that stood out on this occasion when I read the passage; that what the Angel Gabriel said to Mary was in her experience the "unimaginable". We cannot imagine the "unimaginable".

Surely there have been occasions in our lives when such has occurred. I was once in the Bournemouth Coroner's court when a workman from Newcastle-upon-Tyne gave evidence about the

death of his brother that he had witnessed. So overcome by emotion, he spoke so no one in court from southern England understood anything he said. The “unimaginable” had happened and what were we to do? We were ‘rescued’ by the family solicitor who bizarrely ‘translated’ Geordie English into southern English.

Would anyone in the world have foreseen the “unimaginable” events that have overwhelmed us all throughout the world in the past year? We were in New Zealand a year ago where on Christmas Day we had all the family meet, some 12 of us crowded round one large table. Not any more, it will be a very slimmed down event. Our run back from New Zealand was during the period that COVID-19 was starting to grip the world and we could not imagine what was to happen to us, and whether we would get home. Great relief when the plane touched down at Heathrow.

We have no doubt had such experiences!? Have we had that Angel Unaware speak to us with a request / statement for action? We often speak of us being asked to do work for God in His direct Service. Yet much of His work is done by our being in so called ‘secular’ organisations where we can use our Christian influence to great effect. Christians are, whatever may be said, still treated as reliable people; that is a back handed compliment. I was once at a meeting, where unusually for me, I was on the back row as a minor bit player, representing my church at the local Community Association. At the end of the meeting, one of the bosses came up to me and handed me a piece of paper that was the application form to become the Warden of the Centre and Secretary. At the next meeting I was the *de facto* CEO at the top table. At the interview I made my Christian principles clear and we were able to spend a fruitful time with them. So please look out for that Angel and that Unimaginable request for action.

The Angel Gabriel said ‘Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’

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Mary accepted what the Angel Gabriel said and acted upon it. We too need to do the same when God calls us.

4th Hymn

Angels from the realms of glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5CZ8STVcks>

Closing Prayer

Revelation 4:11

¹¹ 'You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.'