

## 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020 10 am The Old Testament hope of a Messiah to come

Service led by Lindsey Attwood, Reading by Geoff Whiteman, Talk by Val Whiteman, Lindsey also interviews Lis Cox asking her what Christmas means to her (before the talk)

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### ***Greeting and Update on Andrew***

[Note: the dialogue in the next three sections has been edited.]

[Lindsey:] Morning everybody.

[Val:] Morning.

[Lis:] Morning Lindsey,

[Lindsey:] Hello. Hi Lis, Hi Geoff.

[Geoff:] Hello Lindsey.

[Lindsey:] Lis is joining us this morning because she's going to be doing an interview with me about Christmas, which is really exciting, and Geoff is going to be bringing us our reading this morning. So, is everybody well?

[Lis:] I am.

[Lindsey:] Very very very beautiful. So it's lovely to see you

[Geoff:] Thank you very much.

[Lindsey:] I shall see you later and obviously Val is going to bring us a fantastic talk this morning as well. It's lovely to have everybody watching this morning, so I hope you enjoy the service and do meet Jesus as well.

[Val:] Can we ask how Andrew is before you start?

[Lindsey:] Oh yes. Yes, everybody keeps asking me how Andrew is, so I thought I'd give us an update, because obviously he's getting a lot better: he's had lots of antibiotics, and his swelling is beginning to go down thankfully now. And less medication, I'm hoping, so he's a much happier bunny. So, thank you for your prayers, because it has been a tough time for him. And so thank you very much and just pray that he doesn't go back to any more infection, especially coming up to Christmas because there's some lovely food and things like that. So, thank you.

So I'm going to I'll see you in a minute, Lis, I'm just going to do a few notices, I'm going to do an activity as well, so I shall see you in a bit.

### ***Notices***

So welcome everybody if you're joining us for the first time. Just as we normally do, I'll give you notices.

- There's a 6pm service this evening, it's a healing and refreshing service.
- There's going to be an online Carol service on the 20th at 6pm so that's a really good thing to come to as well.
- As normal you've got all the children's activities with the newsletter.
- And there's two other things that might suggest that you do. Myself and Andrew are going to be hopefully doing an activity on about the 18th or 19th: Christmas carols and mulled wines, and we're going to do it on Clarke's Avenue, down our street. So it might be nice, if you wanted to do

something different and you're struggling to get with your families this year, maybe pray about what God might be asking you to do around your street, and just see whether there's something likely to come out of it. We've connected with a family at the end of the street, and we're trying to do it between us, so it's quite a nice thing to do.

- Michelle's also asked me to give you a message. She would love, if you can, everyone to send in a video of yourself saying Happy Christmas. It can be as an individual, or as a group, or as your family, so it'd be lovely on Christmas morning to have as many of us as possible to say Happy Christmas. It's really hard at this time because we can't all get together.
- The other thing is that there will be a Christmas service in the building, so that will be on Wednesday the 23rd. And that's at 10:30, and then there'll be an 8am service on Christmas day so there will actually be a service on Christmas day: it just won't be the 10am but it will be an 8am.

### Activity: Star

So, this is the second Sunday in Advent. if you remember rightly last week, Michelle was showing us this lovely Advent calendar.

So you might be maybe working through one of these. Today in a minute, I'm going to be making with you a little star, a [five-pointed] star. If you want to do this while I'm going to go and light the candle in a minute, what I would love you to do is to go and find a piece of paper. It's has to be square. I've used an A4 sheet [and cut a square] which is 21

Five minutes a day Advent Calendar				
<b>Can you find five minutes a day, in all the busy-ness, to focus on God's great promise to us – Emmanuel, God with us, here in our world?</b>				
This advent calendar is aimed at everyone, whatever age. If you have small children, do the activities with them and talk to them. If you are older, or on your own, use it as an opportunity for quiet reflection. If you are in a family, maybe you could do it together. <b>Make it work for you, at the level you need it.</b>				
1 Make, buy or find a star and hang it up. The wise men spent a long time following the star. Let your star remind you to pray for people who are searching.	2 Use a journey you make today (to work, the school, the shops ...) to think about how you can get nearer to God.	3 Listen to some songs on a worship CD. Join in enthusiastically! Thank God for the freedom Jesus brought us to worship Him.	4 Read Isaiah chapter 9, verses 2, 6 and 7. Draw a picture of what it means to you, or write it down in your own words.	5 'Wonderful' – make a list of adjectives describing God's character.
6 'Counsellor' –	7 'Mighty God' –	8 'Everlasting Father' –	9 'Prince of Peace' –	10 Show God's love to

cm by 21 cm. And you will need a ruler and pencil and a pair of scissors. So while I'm going to go light the candle, you may want to go and do that. So I'm just going to go light our candle. So bear with me. This is from Michelle. So I'm going to light the first candle. Then I'm going to light the second one. Make sure I've got Teddy next to me just to make sure I don't burn Teddy!

So Advent is all about anticipation. And it's all about waiting. So what are people waiting for at the minute? What are you going to be waiting for? What are you struggling with? And we're all waiting at the minute for the new vaccine. Andrew has been waiting for a very long time, till his jaw feels better.

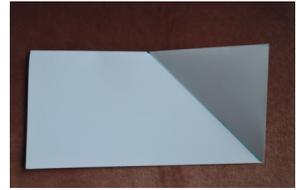
Val is going to be talking to us a bit later about the Messiah and how the Jewish people were actually waiting for Messiah to come, and she is going to be looking at all the prophecies and the bits pointing to Jesus in the Old Testament, and how the Jews were waiting for Him but they didn't quite know the type of Messiah they were going to get.

Now interestingly, the wise man we all know about studied the stars and followed the one to the manger. It signified to them that there was a new king, hence why we're going to do a star this morning. And they left everything to find the Christ. And when they got there they worshipped Him. So, hopefully, while I've been doing this, you may well now have got your piece of paper. And if you haven't, you can always Google on YouTube "making a six-sided star," they'll all come up there, so do have a look, you'll probably find some more difficult ones as well some interesting ones.

Anyway, so if you've got your piece of paper, you'll start with your piece of paper which is to be like that, square. What you want to do, you want to carefully fold it in half, landscape so you have it like that. So that should be it. So edge together and then what you're going to do, we're going to make on this side, sort of going to criss cross them over so you're going to fold your edges to the bottom.



Then you're going to fold the top corner down like that, so it makes a sort of triangle shape. And you're going to lift that out, so you have one line [diagonally across like this:] →

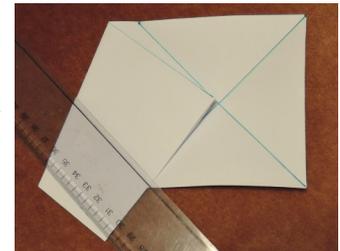


You're then going to [take this other corner and fold it the other way, then unfold again]. So you should have three triangles that are on this side →



If you need to, you don't really need to do this, but you might want to get a bit of a pencil and you could put a little mark in the middle. You don't have to. It's just so you know where to put the next bit.

Now this is the bit where you're going to need to turn this upside down now, so that the opening bit is at the top. This time, so it's that way round, and you've got this.



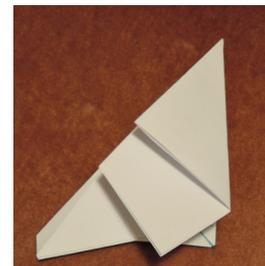
You've swapped it over onto the side because what we're now going to do, we're going to take this edge here, and we're going to fold it so [the corner] touches that little point [where the diagonal folds cross]. And you're going to just push that down and you will find it's not quite on that line so don't worry if it's not straight down there. Okay. It'll be slightly off. So that's normal. Now, when you've done that, you're going to turn it round the other way so it was like this wasn't it. So you've got it there. Now we're going to turn it that way. And that little bit flap there, which is going out, you're going to turn back on itself. And it's going to go to there, like that. I had to watch YouTube several times - a lot - I'm a bit of a slow learner! You've got that bit now. Now you'll have a bit of a flappy bit there. It should look like



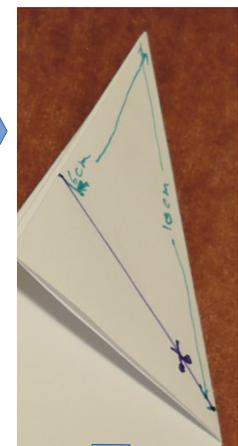
something like that. So then what you're going to do now, taking that [top right corner]. And you're going to, you're going to have to go beyond [the original diagonal fold], so don't worry if it's there, just go beyond that bit. And you're going to meet those two, so it's like that. So you should have like that. → Now it will look a bit weird and messy, like this. I'm sure many of you looking at here, and I've made one of those before and it's much easier than what you're doing but this is the one saw on YouTube. Then if you turn it round, You're going to then push those [two sides together] like this.



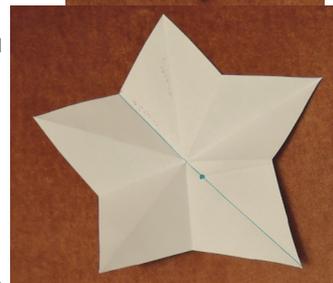
And then what you're going to do, you're going to measure 10 cm on that side, and 6 cm on that side. This is where you need your ruler.



Alright, so you want to draw a line from your 10 cm [to the 6cm point]. So a bit messy at the minute and this is where you need a pair of scissors. Don't make your paper too thick because it's quite hard to cut through there. And then the magic.



→ Oh, this isn't a Bethlehem star. I know Denise was telling me about Bethlehem stars with 2 points, 1 point at the top [?]. I haven't found one. If anybody else has found one you might want to share that. So, there we go. So you've got your star, [five-pointed] star, and you could you could make this smaller if you



wanted to, and you could even make lots of them and perhaps or string them together and do something really nice but I did pretty things, and just bought some stuff from Wilko [other craft shops are available] and spent some time yesterday watching a film and clicking on bits and pieces so you can make some really pretty decorations. And so there's a star.

### **Interview: What Christmas Means to Me**

We're now going to see Lis. Lis, I hope you can come and talk so we're going to talk about Christmas and what Christmas means to you.

[Lis:] Hi,

[Lindsey:] good morning.

[Lis:] I've got something, it looks nothing like a star.

[Lindsey:] Oh, show me yours. Well, it's got folds in it though. I'm very impressed that you've had a go, I'm really impressed.

[Lis:] I think I'm going to pull it up again and cut a bit more. However, that was something.

[Lindsey:] If it doesn't work then it... blame the person teaching you. It's quite difficult.

Anyway, I was going to ask you, Lis, it's nice to ask people, it's nice to just chat with people and find out what Christmas means to you. So, I was going to ask you, what do you love about Christmas?

[Lis:] I love light. And I love music. And I love food, and all of those things, the kind of resonance of each of those things has changed for me with the years. So when I was a little girl (I can remember that far back), the lights on the Christmas tree, especially if the room lights were out, were magical. And now I really feel the darkness of the days. But there is that light at the end of the tunnel, which is the light of the Christ child, and of the star of the manger. So that light has changed. Right. It hasn't changed. But how I see it has changed. Light and music. Yeah, I love Christmas carols. I love the Messiah. And, again, that brings you through to the angels' song. I'm not quite sure where food takes me. But I love that too.

[Lindsey:] If I look at Christmas [music], Yes...

[Lis:] Yeah, I mean there's so many... With the first verse of Once in Royal David's City in a darkened church, and the light coming on. There are just so many, so many lovely layers, you know, like unwrapping something and then you come through to the centre.

[Lindsey:] I'm going to ask another question as well. What will Christmas..., what about this year? How will Christmas actually be different, what would it be like for you this year?

[Lis:] Well, it will be different. We were originally going to go up to Scotland to our oldest son and his family, two granddaughters, they are absolutely delightful and have such lovely innocent faith. But he feels that with Nicola Sturgeon having said, "Yes, there is a freedom from the lockdown, but I would prefer everybody to behave themselves." So he feels as a minister he should set a good example, so he's banned his parents.

[Lindsey:] Aah,...

[Lis:] And so it'll just be me and my beloved husband, but we're trying to make it a special day in a different way.

[Lindsey:] Fantastic, aah, well hopefully all of us, maybe because we can't travel as much, maybe we'll get to see more of each other, we'll be able to at least wave and perhaps go for walks and things. It might be a good time, maybe



2. You, oh Lord, have made a way  
The great divide You heal  
For when our hearts were far away  
Your love went further still  
Yes, your love goes further still

*Chorus*

*Bridge:*

We lift up our eyes, lift up our eyes  
You're the Giver of Life

*Repeat bridge three times*

*Chorus*

To You alone belongs the highest praise.

**Reading: Matthew 2:1-18 [NIVUK 1984]**

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.'

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

13 When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

16 When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice is heard in Ramah,  
weeping and great mourning,

Rachel weeping for her children  
and refusing to be comforted,  
because they are no more.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

## **Talk**

[Lindsey Attwood:]

Ah, thank you Geoff. That's great. So I just want to pray for Val now, as she brings God's word this morning.

So, Father God, thank You so much for Val, thank You for all the work she's been doing, listening to You, and trying to hear what You're saying through this and where You were in the Old Testament, and I just pray for now, that You'd bless her, Lord, and bless her words. And I pray that You'd bless us too. And that we would really see You in this, and know You more and more. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

[Val Whiteman:]

Amen. Thank you, Lindsey.

So, Advent's normally a time when we remember the coming King. And usually we've lit the candle that reminds us that John the Baptist is the forerunner. But we're going to look a little bit more widely today. Do we think that Jesus came as a complete shock to the Jewish race? Is the Old Testament over and done with, and we can get rid of it by the time Jesus comes? Well, no, and I think, no.

I'm afraid there'll be lots of references today, for which I apologise. Hamish usually puts the transcripts online. So if you need to, can you look there for details or take notes as we go through. Because I had such fun doing this (I know, I should get out more) but see how many references you can find, because I found it so enriching in my understanding of hopes from the Old Testament.

There are different types of Old Testament hopes. One is called **typology**, another **direct covenant promises** from God, and a third **prophecies** about a coming King.

And the point is this – and please take this away when I've overwhelmed you with references – that God's salvation plan was from the beginning. It wasn't just an afterthought, it wasn't in key texts, but it's in a whole sweep of the Old Testament narrative, which is why I'm going to be starting with typology. This indeed itself is just breathtaking. And it's also a bit of a problem for me because I could probably be talking all day. So, I'm afraid I'm going to have to be selective, so if I don't use your favourite reference, then use it for yourself and meditate on it.

So, to start with, **typology**. You know that Coventry is going to be a city of culture next year, and I am afraid I do find it a little hard to get my head around that, I'm sorry. But in the Middle Ages, it really was a city of culture, because kings, nobles, the whole government almost visited Coventry every June for the performance of the Mystery plays, which were famous all over the country. The name of Mystery plays is also Ludus Coventriae: the game or the play of Coventry. Now, Coventry Mysteries were slightly unusual in that they were a bit like Oberammergau: they were the life of Christ only. If you went a little bit further north to York or to Chester, but especially to York, there were, and there still are, the more usual Mystery plays, and they start with Creation, which is performed at dawn in mid June on Corpus Christi day, and they end in dusk, with the Last Judgement. So the Old Testament, how are they going

to manage that? Because there's quite a lot in there. So what they do is they select plays, so that they represent types of Christ or typology, they're forerunners of Christ from the Old Testament, either in behaviour or in action.

So the first type of Christ, we have the Creation, and then we have the fall of man. And Adam is the first man who failed. Jesus is the second Adam who succeeds. And you can look up 1 Corinthians 15 verse 45, where Paul spells it out for us: Jesus is our second, and better, Adam.

And then there's Noah and the flood. And that's slightly different in the way it does typology, because Noah represents Jesus, who takes people on the ark, which is like the Church. And we are safe inside the ark of the Church, from the storms of life. So Noah also represents the salvation work of Jesus.

And then, probably most familiarly, there's Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac, where Abraham gives his only son freely because God asks him to.

And the link there between Jesus, God, Isaac and Abraham is fairly obvious, isn't it, that Abraham was willing to give a sacrifice because God asked him to, and a much greater sacrifice happened where God gave His only Son, again, freely for us. In the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac there was no sacrifice of Isaac. A ram was put in his place. So it's like the substitution, that, well, our sins are carried by Jesus and He substitutes for us.

These are the types of Christ from the Mystery plays. There are an awful lot more in the Old Testament if you'd like to think about them. They all prefigure some aspect of who Jesus is. Now you'll notice one big omission, which is from the Mystery plays and from this, my talk, which is Exodus and we're going to touch on that story a little later on.

So that's typology. Then we move on to the **covenant promises** that God made with His people. Again, there are many, but let's look at the one from the Isaac story. And all these covenants right from the beginning of Genesis point to a new beginning in Jesus, and this is just amazing. Here is the promise for Abraham. It's for Abraham, it's for the Israelites, but also if you notice, it's for all of us too. And it says, [in Genesis 22]

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

"All nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me:" you might like to see if I'm right. And check out the other other covenants. There's one in Genesis 18, an earlier promise to Abraham, for example, but there's Isaac's covenant too in Genesis 26.

And there's Jacob's blessing to Judah, in Genesis 49, so it's not simply that God promises to Abraham, and then forgets it, as it were, He renews this covenant time and time again. And each time He renews the covenant, He talks about *all* nations being blessed through Israel. So how are they going to be blessed? We're going to be blessed through the coming of Jesus. So typology, the way in which the Bible story resonates with the Jesus story, the way in which the covenant promises, bring us this hope for all nations, not just for Israel.

And finally, the **direct prophecies**. Now prophecies in the Old Testament quite often are statements about where Israel is before God, and what action God will take, so they can be read simply as for being for people of their own time. But also, a lot of them resonate for later peoples too, so they can refer to more than one thing. You have to use discernment therefore with biblical prophecies.

And that's the interesting way previous generations have been much more sophisticated in the way they read the Old Testament, and its relationship with the new than we are, I think.

So, I want to look at the prophecies slightly differently, so I'm not simply doing lists of texts. So what I want to do is to look at the birth story that Geoff read for us a while ago. It's so familiar to everybody, but you might like to have your Bibles open at Matthew 1 and 2. What I could have done was to go through the genealogies which everybody skips at the beginning of Matthew. And again, that's something you might like to do in the run-up to Christmas. The people that are involved, as it were, in Jesus's coming, are most of them familiar, some of them not, some of them men, some of them women, some of them famous, some of them never mentioned anywhere else, and yet they're all part of the Jesus story. Again, an amazing thing, and really, really encouraging for us, that we might feel that were a very tiny, tiny part of the Jesus story. But nevertheless, we are, as it were, in the genealogy.

Only Matthew and Luke tell birth stories, you remember, and they focus on slightly different things, and interestingly, in different ways. Matthew's story, because famously Matthew writes for Jewish believers, is rich in links to the Old Testament, and he does use the Old Testament slightly differently from the way that we might. So again, if you look up a good commentary on this chapter or these chapters (I used Michael Greene's commentary in *The Bible Speaks Today* series which is really useful). So if we look at Matthew chapter 1, at the end, that Geoff didn't read, Matthew talks of Immanuel, Jesus coming: that's going to be His name, Immanuel. And we all know very famously that Immanuel means 'God with us.' And there is the reference to Isaiah 7, verse 14, where we can see God's promise to His own chosen people, even when they exasperated Him. God with us, isn't that amazing, that that is what Jesus is for us. And when you unpack that, when you look at the richness of it: He came to us as a baby. He entrusted himself, God with us, as a vulnerable creature, as well as being the God with us: He stays with us all the days of our life.

Now the Romans interestingly called Jewish people 'atheists', because they had no image of God in their temples. And that's a really interesting difference between what you might call the made-up gods, and the God who is the Jewish God, who is the creator God, because the Jewish God comes to His people, not vice-versa. We are in His image, not He in ours. And it's very important to remember this because we do tend to drift towards the pagan expectation that we can manipulate God. So, if you think about the Roman gods, there's a creator god Zeus, Jupiter, but he's very, very different from the Jewish God, you can look at what he looks like, and he tends to fling thunderbolts about and behave in a very bad manner, immorally, when it suits him. Well, he's made-up, whereas the Jewish God is not.

So in the beginning of Matthew, Matthew reminds us, and through Matthew God reminds us, that He comes to us in salvation. And not only does He come to us through the covenant where He talks with people in the Old Testament, and He says to them, "I make a covenant with you." This time He comes to us as a human being, a part of the Godhead, entrusted to a human family, and that is such an amazing concept which we take for granted when we celebrate it every Christmas. You can practically do Matthew 2 off by heart, can't you. Well, I challenge you, just read it and think about it. This baby was to be called Jesus, which means 'God saves'. And this was a common name because of Joshua, which is a variant of it, the successor to Moses who bought the children of Israel into the promised land after the years in the wilderness. But in Jesus' case, it was absolutely true: God saves. He was God, and He saved. And you'll just have spotted, I hope, another instance where the children of Israel in history prefigure the life of Jesus, through Joshua.

So in chapter two, where we started reading, you can see that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It's odd, I think, that Herod has to ask his wise men in his court, what the wise men are talking about when they say they've come to find a king,

"Where's he going to be born?" Herod says. And so he gets the prophecy from Micah chapter 5 verse 2, which says,

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me  
one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old,  
from ancient times."

3 Therefore Israel will be abandoned  
until the time when she who is in labour bears a son,  
and the rest of his brothers return  
to join the Israelites.

4 He will stand and shepherd his flock  
in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.  
And they will live securely, for then his greatness  
will reach to the ends of the earth.

So, there are prophecies about a coming King which obviously Micah wouldn't have understood, and Bethlehem: why Bethlehem? But Jesus fulfils that prophecy in His birth, and He fulfils a later bit: He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, when He grows up. Matthew, writing to Jewish Christians, stresses that right from the beginning, Scripture was fulfilled: Gentiles, like the Magi, were coming to worship, in contrast with King Herod, who did the opposite of worship.

We can now look at the servant songs in Isaiah. And you can see there that there's a richness of the whole of... I could have spent the whole morning on Isaiah, because it's just so wonderful that there are songs where Isaiah has an image of what God is going to be like when He comes as saviour. And I think that's amazing. Isaiah 42:6, 49:6 and 52:10 as well. There's just so much richness from Isaiah.

So, after the Magi have left, Joseph is commanded to flee from Herod to Egypt, and in Hosea 11 verse 1 it says, "Out of Egypt I have called my son." So Jesus' family flee to Egypt, and commentators think that what Matthew is doing here is stressing what happened this week of the Jesus story. He is the new, the better Israel. And like Israel, His story includes the Exodus. He is exiled because a tyrannical ruler kills baby boys, just as Pharaoh tried to kill the Israelite babies. When He grows up and is tempted, He goes into the wilderness, but unlike the children in Israel He's obedient to God, and He spends 40 days not 40 years there. So He really is the new Adam, the new Israel. He is what God intended us all to be.

If you look beyond the birth stories you can look at Isaiah 53, which is so rich and understanding what the new man, Jesus, is: the new Israel. He's ordinary. We don't notice Him. And that's something I think, when you look at pictures of Jesus, and you look at the way in which the church rightly venerates what Jesus has done for us, you don't see Him as Isaiah saw Him, the real human being, the one that you wouldn't actually notice if He walked down the street. He has no beauty that we should observe Him. We don't understand Him, because He bears our sins for us. And we let Him do this. He really is both man and God, not just God playing at humanity. And I think again that's a whole new book of things to think about: the pain of the crucifixion is real. The cost to Him is huge. And when we must not underplay that. It's an appalling sacrifice, but it's one we rejoice at because it brings us salvation.

You note what the prophecies say: He will die for many, He will be buried with the rich and with transgressors. He will carry the sins of all of us, and we won't understand it. Jewish people think that this refers to the nation of Israel, and it well might, but the fit with Jesus and Isaiah 53 is just extraordinary.

I'd love to go on to the Luke story of Jesus's coming, because he too knows that Jesus is fulfilling Scripture in His birth, but I know I've kept on saying you might like to do this – I get told off because I was a teacher and I keep on setting people homework in my sermons, and I'm really sorry, but I'm unashamedly doing it today, because I think for us coming into Advent, this is the thing that we ought to be doing to get ready for the coming King, and to realise who He is. So, I'm going to kind-of leave you with Luke with just a few thoughts. He's writing for largely a Gentile audience so his use of Scripture there is... He does use direct allusions to prophecies, he knows his Old Testament very, very well, but I suspect that he actually makes his readers work a little bit harder about how words are used in the Old Testament than perhaps Matthew does. So I'm going to suggest just one to start you off. Think about he writes about the shepherds, and the angels coming to the shepherds, and what 'shepherd' might mean to Israel. We know that the shepherds on the hillside were outcasts, not very well thought of. We know that they were probably looking after the temple flock, with all the richness that that would imply about the sacrificial lamb of Passover. But also if you just Google, or go into commentaries and look at what 'shepherd' meant to Israel, God was the Shepherd: we've already seen it in one of the prophecies that I've read, but also the leaders of the people were supposed to be shepherds, and often they weren't very good. So, again, Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the one who fulfils Psalm 23, and all the other references to shepherds and shepherdiness.

So I'm going to end with a last prophecy. Imagine, shut your eyes and imagine that you were on the hillside with the shepherds, and you see the light from the sky, and immediately you think about Isaiah chapter 60:

- 1 'Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.
- 2 See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.
- 3 Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

So let's sum up what I've said, because it's been quite a lot.

- God's plan was from the beginning, for us.
- **All** nations were to be blessed in the Messiah, right from the start.
- Jesus's birth and subsequent life was foretold.
- So Alleluia!
- **And now**, check out what I've said: don't trust me, trust the word of the Lord, do your own exploration, especially Luke.

Amen.

I want to give a short time for reflection now, because this is the 'So what?' moment. I love looking at words and how they work. It was my job. But, if that's all I do with the Bible it's not much good. Why is it so important that God made it clear to us that He has a salvation plan right from the beginning? You'll have your own answers. For me it's because I can be sure that God still has a plan, that, though I can't see many things, I can be absolutely sure that God is still there, still in control. That Immanuel, God with us, has never left. The great sweep of history, as well as the minutiae of my daily life, is known to

God, directed ultimately by Him. So what I'd like to do now is for all of us to spend a couple of minutes reflecting on your own understanding of what Immanuel might mean for you.

Father God, thank You that You have a plan for us, that You know us and that You are with us in these difficult times. Help us to understand Your love for us, and Your nearness to us every day. Amen.

## **Intercessions**

[Lindsey:]

Thank you, Val. That was super, thank you for that. We're going to spend a little bit of time praying now, and then I'm going to end with the blessing and we're going to have a song at the end. So I'm just going to pray.

Thank You, Father God, that You promised over hundreds of years that the Messiah would come. You had a plan from the beginning to rescue us. Thank You. Many of us, Lord, are waiting for things. Coronavirus has been a time of waiting and perhaps frustration. With some of the time in lockdown, and especially at a time when we're all wanting to see our families, we're so desperate to see them. Father, I just pray that You'd comfort us now. And any disappointment or frustration and especially for our younger generation, I pray that we would adjust to this tier system, and that we'd co-operate with it. Father, I just pray that we would have patience as we wait for the vaccines, but I'm so grateful, Lord, thank You so much for all the people, all the scientists who have been working so hard to find this vaccine. Thank You that our government have ordered so many of them and that vaccination can actually start next week. I'm so grateful that this has come quicker than I even imagined.

Father, I just pray for the economy at the minute, for those people whose jobs have been affected, whose livelihoods are affected, and who might be struggling with anxiety and fear. I pray, Lord, that Your comfort would come in a practical way too. I pray for financial help, Lord, where people are particularly in the hospitality industry. We pray for those. We pray for people who have felt that their relationships, being at home a lot, the marriages and things like that. I pray, Lord Jesus, that people would be able to speak, be honest to each other. And I pray that Your Holy Spirit would guide and bring healing power.

I pray also Father God, for the way we might have to celebrate Christmas slightly differently this year. I ask that You might actually inspire us, that maybe this is part of Your plan, that Christmas is ultimately about You. It's about You coming to be a rescuer, and to save, and You see all the people in this town in Kenilworth, that You love and want to stretch out Your hand to help us to hear the Holy Spirit. Help us to be still. And rather than feel disappointed and frustrated at what we can't do, I pray that You would give us a way forward to what we can do.

Lord, I also pray for anybody who is sick at the moment, who is struggling with their health. Thank You, Jesus, that You've been with Andrew and actually helping him to slowly get better. And I pray for anybody else who might be feeling on their own, or struggling with their health. Please, Father God, help them to know that You haven't abandoned them, they're not on their own. I pray they feel a sense of community, that they'd reach out and tell people when they're struggling.

But I ask, Lord, that we need a Saviour, even though we've been Christians for a long time, we all need a Saviour, we need to see Your hand breaking through, actually restoring things, healing things. So we ask You, come Holy

Spirit, come and show us Jesus the King. And I pray, Lord Jesus, that we would be willing to listen to You through this time of Advent, that we would open our ears to the voice of the King, and that we would become more obedient to what You're saying, knowing that You have risked everything for us. So we say thank You, Jesus.  
Amen.

### **Blessing**

I'm going to end with a blessing prayer and then we're going to just have a song at the end, so I want to thank you so much for joining us this morning. I hope it's actually meant something to you. I hope that you've met with Jesus this morning. And it's not just about this morning, it's about the weeks, it's about tomorrow morning, it's like, making sure that you're spending time with Jesus tomorrow. What is God saying to you tomorrow? When you're struggling, when you're fearful, just to relax and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you this week. So we're going to end with this blessing prayer. This has come from, I think, the 6pm service that Val shared with me actually.

With love and compassion, come Lord Jesus.

With judgement and mercy, come, Lord Jesus.

In power and glory, come, Lord Jesus.

In wisdom and truth, come, Lord Jesus.

I hope you have a really blessed week. Amen

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Song: Joy Has Dawned**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Joy has dawned upon the world<br/>Promised from creation<br/>God's salvation now unfurled<br/>Hope for every nation<br/>Not with fanfares from above<br/>Not with scenes of glory<br/>But a humble gift of love<br/>Jesus born of Mary</p> <p>2. Sounds of wonder fill the sky<br/>With the songs of angels<br/>As the mighty Prince of Life<br/>Shelters in a stable<br/>Hands that set each star in place<br/>Shaped the earth in darkness<br/>Cling now to a mother's breast<br/>Vulnerable and helpless</p> | <p>3. Shepherds bow before the Lamb<br/>Gazing at the glory<br/>Gifts of men from distant lands<br/>Prophecy the story<br/>Gold – a King is born today<br/>Incense – God is with us<br/>Myrrh – His death will make a way<br/>And by His blood He'll win us</p> <p>4. Son of Adam Son of heaven<br/>Given as a ransom<br/>Reconciling God and man<br/>Christ our mighty Champion<br/>What a Saviour what a Friend<br/>What a glorious mystery<br/>Once a babe in Bethlehem<br/>Now the Lord of history</p> |
|---|--|

Gloria in excelsis Deo  
Gloria in excelsis Deo

Come to Bethlehem and see  
He whose birth the angels sing  
Come adore on bended knee  
Christ the Lord the newborn King

Gloria in excelsis Deo  
Gloria in excelsis Deo

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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