



Order of Service

28 November 2021

10.00 am

Worship led by Rev Dr André Groenewald
Music from Martin Petty and choir



John 1:6-8

“There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.”

Welcome & Announcements

Good morning - Welcome to our service of worship. We will now light the “first Advent candle”.

Allow me a few announcements please:

We need volunteers to deliver the Christmas cards to a few streets. There is a bundle on the table on the porch. We also need volunteers to deliver the December edition of the Blether. Please speak to Richard Henderson if you would like to help.

This afternoon is the bereavement service. If you would like to attend please let me or Kay know. You are more than welcome.

Next week will have a 9 am Breakfast service and 10 am Joint Christmas carol service with Currie Kirk here in Balerno.

Please look at the website for all the intimations.

Worshipping God Together

Minister:

Jesus was with God when the world was made; He is the Light of life. He is the Hope for the world.

In our dreams and our time on earth;

He is our Peace and our deepest Joy.

**Beloved, I greet you in the Name of God the Father
the Son and the
Holy Spirit.**

Amen

CH4 509 Jesus calls us o'er tumult

Jesus calls us!

O'er the tumult of our life's wild, restless sea;
day by day his voice is sounding, saying,
"Christian, follow me."

As, of old, apostles heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying "Christian, love me more."

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us! By your mercy, Saviour,
make us hear your call,

give our hearts to your obedience,
serve and love you best of all.

Opening prayer and Lord's prayer

God of mystery,

we have stepped into Advent and await your revelations.

We have stepped into Advent, hoping that we and others
will see and feel and know your message.

You are a patient, persevering God, who offers your all
for us;

you offer to us the depth of your being, the essence of
life,

the gift of love beyond compare.

And we wait to celebrate again the gift of Jesus born for
us,

given for us.

We wait, but don't always find it easy to wait,
and for that we are sorry.

We confess our impatience and our lack of attention to the journey and its signposts.

Teach us that preparation is part of the journey and that the journey is part of the gift.

You offer us a way to follow, a path to tread, a journey that leads to hope, to joy, to trust and to love, and we confess we do not always follow.

Now, may we step into this Advent as faithful people, seeking forgiveness and trying to follow your path, and believing you will be walking with us every step of the way.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into

temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power,

the glory for ever. Amen.

Choir sings “Joy to the world”

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive its king;
let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
Let all their songs employ;
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness,
and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Reflecting on God’s Word

Bible reading: John 1 :6-8, 19-28 (from the Message) read by George Burt

⁶⁻⁸ There once was a man, his name John, sent by God to point out the way to the Life-Light. He came to show everyone where to look, who to believe in. John was not himself the Light; he was there to show the way to the Light.

Thunder in the Desert

¹⁹⁻²⁰ When Jews from Jerusalem sent a group of priests and officials to ask John who he was, he was completely honest. He didn’t evade the question. He told the plain truth: “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹ They pressed him, “Who, then? Elijah?” “I am not.” “The Prophet?” “No.” ²² Exasperated, they said, “Who, then? We need an answer for those who sent us. Tell us something—anything!—about yourself.” ²³ “I’m thunder in the desert: ‘Make the road straight for God!’ I’m doing what the prophet Isaiah preached.” ²⁴⁻²⁵ Those sent to question him were from the Pharisee party. Now they had a question of their own: “If you’re neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?” ²⁶⁻²⁷ John answered, “I only baptize using water. A person you don’t recognize has taken his stand in your midst. He comes after me, but he is not in second place to me. I’m not even worthy to hold his coat for him.” ²⁸ These conversations took place in Bethany on the other side of

the Jordan, where John was baptizing at the time.



All age talk

I am going to share my happiness

Jesus brought us so much JOY and HAPPINESS when He was born. We are getting closer to Christmas which means we are preparing ourselves to receive this JOY. The BEES always prepare and make sure they are ready to serve their queen. Just like the BEES, should we be ready to serve our KING Jesus who was born so that we can live. As BEElievers, we have a very important task namely to share this message of JOY with everyone that we meet. When we are joyful, happy, welcoming and kind, we introduce them to Jesus.

How can **you** share your JOY this Christmas?

CH4 279 Make way, make way, for Christ the King Graham Kendrick
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Make way, make way for Christ the King
in splendour arrives;
fling wide the gates and welcome him
into your lives.

Chorus:

Make way! Make way!

Make way!

For the King of kings

Make way! Make way! Make way!

And let His kingdom in.

He comes the broken hearts to heal

The prisoners to free;
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,
The blind shall see. **Chorus**

And those who mourn with heavy hearts,
Who weep and sigh,
With laughter, joy and royal crown
He'll beautify. **Chorus**

We call you now to worship Him
As Lord of all
To have no gods before Him
Their thrones must fall! **Chorus**

Sermon

John the Baptist did not have an easy task. He was called in a time when no Jews was certain of his/her life or their income or their future. They were living in very strange and uncertain times. The Romans governed Israel with an iron fist and made sure that their authority will not be questioned or challenged. They allowed an Edomite, half Jew Herod and after he died, his sons to “rule” the different regions. I say the word “rule” in inverted commas, as their power was quite limited. There was also conflict within the Jewish leadership between the

the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the temple authorities.

John had to tell everyone about the coming of Jesus to the world. He had to tell the people, in the midst of all their conflict, uncertainty, poverty, hopelessness, fear and anxiety that there is a way out of it all and that Jesus was the ONLY way!

I think it is safe to assume that they thought John was out of his mind. He lived in the desert, dressed in clothes made of animal skins, tied with a leather belt just like the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament, hence the reaction of the Pharisees, that he might be the prophet Elijah. It is clear that they did not understand one word he said.

They were far more concerned about their image and their knowledge of the coming of the Messiah.

I think there is definitely a few parallels to be drawn from their context to ours.

We too live in uncertain times, where we do not know what tomorrow might bring especially with regard to the current Covid pandemic and the discovery of the new variant Omnicron. And the latest press conference of the Prime minister along with his aids, did not alleviate our fears or uncertainty.

We also live in a world where there the divide between the “have’s” and the “have nots” are growing. On Friday evening, in the bitter cold night with the wind howling around the corners, Nanda and I found ourselves in front of the “SOCIAL BITE” CAFÉ in ROSE STREET. Homeless people were waiting in a long que to get inside for something warm to drink and eat. Now, I do not know whether you are familiar with social bite. But it is a

charity whose mission it is to end homelessness. They provide food for the homeless and in their cafe's they have a system called "pay it forward" where people can pay for other people to eat for free. They distribute over 140,000 items of food and hot drinks every year to the country's most vulnerable people. People in a situation of homelessness and food poverty are invited into their chain of sandwich shops to enjoy handmade food and tasty coffee throughout the day. They also open up in the evenings for a series of "Social Suppers" events. These include "Women's only" nights and nights for refugees. They also run a joint venture restaurant called Vesta Restaurant and Bar, which opens exclusively to people experiencing homelessness every Monday afternoon for a free sit-down two-course meal.

We live in a time where refugees are choosing to risk their lives just so that they can be free from poverty, oppression, violence, corruption. This week, all of us heard about the tragedy of how a boat overturned in the English channel and killed 27 migrants of which three were children! This is unfortunately still going on despite all the efforts to stop the illegal migrant smuggling.

We live in a world where we feel the consequences of climate change – all due to our planet being exploited. This leads to irregular and life-threatening weather patterns. We have seen on the news and heard newsclips of the devastation that storm Arwen brought to our land. Three people have since lost their lives in this storm and many were trapped for hours in the weather.

So our context is pretty much the same albeit different from the people who heard the words of John the Baptist

the first time. We are hearing the words of John the Baptist in the midst of everything that is going on in our lives and world and on our planet, saying “Prepare for the way – prepare for the coming of Jesus!”.

Now what is our reaction to this news? I am sure there will be lot of mixed reactions from the skeptical to the faithful optimist. In many respects I think we can identify with the reaction of the Pharisees to Johns message.

But we have an advantage – we live with the knowledge of hindsight.

Jesus was indeed the way for us all to find redemption and salvation from God. Daily through His Holy Spirit is He guiding us and showing us the way to God, offering us a way out of the circumstances that so often imprison us.

His star that once shone in Bethlehem to Jerusalem to where the Magi saw it first – is still shining .. still guiding us... still convincing us that He is the ONLY way to God, to salvation and reconciliation with God...still the only way to heaven.

He is the Bright star to follow when we loose our way ...when we see no way out of our circumstances.

We can look forward to the birth of Jesus despite our circumstances, despite what is happening on our planet, despite all the human tragedies... Jesus is indeed the ONLY way for us to cope with what is going on, inside us, around us. It is timely that we hear again the message of hope and retell it in a way that people will understand and identify with, which reminds me of the hymn:

Tell me the old old story

of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love.

Tell me the story simply,
as to a little child,
for I am weak and weary,
and helpless and defiled.

Tell me the story slowly,
that I may take it in,
that wonderful redemption,
God's remedy for sin.

tell me the story often,
for I forget so soon;
the early dew of morning
has passed away at noon.

Tell me the story softly,

with earnest tones and grave;
remember I'm the sinner
whom Jesus came to save.

Tell me the story always,
if you would really be,
in any time of trouble,
a comforter to me.

Tell me the same old story
when you have cause to fear
that this world's empty glory
is costing me too dear.

Yes, and when that world's glory
is dawning on my soul,
tell me the old, old story:
"Christ Jesus makes thee whole."

Amen

Prayer of thanksgiving Lesley Burt

CH4 552: 1,2,5,6 Oh for a closer walk with God (Tune: Martyrdom Fenwick)

Oh, for a closer walk with God
a calm and heavenly frame,
a light to shine upon the road
that leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew
when first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul refreshing view
of Jesus and His Word?

The dearest idol I have known,
whate'er that idol be,
help me to tear it from Thy throne
and worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,
calm and serene my frame;
so purer light shall mark the
road that leads me to the Lamb.

Blessing receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Loving God,
as we end our time together and leave this place,
let us go in hope, live by hope,
and be signs of hope for all to see.

In Jesus' name.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be with you, now and forever more.

Amen, Amen, Amen

You are invited to a cup of coffee or tea in the Ogston Hall.