

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Worship Service 10:30AM 7th December 2025
Rev. Zoltan Biro leading and Pauline Mbukwa

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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Waiting in Preparation

WELCOME

Good morning, everyone. It is wonderful to be together.

What an amazing Sunday service we had last week. Three people gave us their testimonies about how God started working in their lives and they were baptised based on their confession of faith. We finished our series on the spiritual gifts. Highlighting that without Love and Humility all is but lost. If any of you got touched and would like to know more about Christianity, or you would like to explore the possibility of baptism, please talk to me or the other deacons.

With all that happened last week, you may miss that last Sunday was the 1st Sunday in Advent. Traditionally this was a time for preparation for the coming Christ. It is preparation for the coming of Christmas, but more importantly this season was a time for waiting for the Second coming of Christ.

Advent comes from Latin and it simply means ***Coming***, so our Advent series will reflect this idea of waiting, and we will focus on how do we have to wait for Christ and maybe this will prepare us to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas too.

Today Pauline will talk about Waiting in Preparation, but before we get there let us Praise our God.

CALL TO WORSHIP

All creation holds its breath.

The time is almost here.

The heavenly choir of angels waits for its cue to sing.

Excitement is all around us.

Prepare your hearts—The grace of God takes on human form.

Good news! Emmanuel, God-with-Us, comes to us.

**We gather to make ready our hearts
for the coming of Christ, our hope.**

HYMN

King of kings, Majesty

God of Heaven living in me

Gentle Saviour, closest friend

Strong Deliverer, beginning and end

All within me falls at Your throne

Your Majesty, I can but bow

I lay my all before You now

In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty

Earth and Heaven worship You
Love eternal, Faithful and True
Who bought the nations, ransomed souls
Brought this sinner near to Your throne

All within me cries out in praise.
Your majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty
Your majesty, I can but bow
I lay my all before You now
In royal robes I don't deserve
I live to serve Your Majesty

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Lighting of the candles

Dear God,
As we journey down this Advent road,
grant us the courage to make peace.
Peace in our hearts,
Peace in our homes,
Peace in our communities,
Peace in our world. Amen.

HYMN

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

And here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

King of all days
Oh so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly you came to the earth you created
All for love's sake became poor

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy

Altogether wonderful to me

I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross x 4

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

TOM HUGHES © COPYRIGHT 2001 THANKYOU MUSIC

FAMILY TIME:

HYMN

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

JAN STRUTHER (1901-1953) © Oxford University Press

*(*An offering will be taken during the following song, after which young people will leave for their groups)*

BIBLE READINGS : Isaiah 40:1-8; John 1: 19-27

SERMON **Waiting in Preparation**

Introduction

The book of Isaiah is a prophecy of the coming Messiah, and it was later fulfilled in the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Isaiah 40:1-2 begins with a message of comfort to the people of Judah, who were in captivity and fighting the Babylonians. God was trying to comfort his people and assure them that the battle was over. He assures them of hope and a future. When we are waiting for something good to happen, we may lose hope along the way and often feel that God is not there. Prophet Isaiah is told by God, "Comfort, comfort my people." We have God who cares, he is concerned about every little detail of our lives.

1. Comfort in Jesus Christ

Where do you find comfort when in despair? Spouse? Friends? Parents? Siblings? God is concerned when his people are suffering, and so he wants to comfort them. Isaiah 40:3-5 focuses on preparing the way for the Lord. It is the fulfilment of the work of John the Baptist in John 1:19-27. The voice of one crying in the wilderness is John. Jesus was the coming Messiah. God was proclaiming a future hope and comfort for Israel, specifically comfort in the Messiah, the Christ. This comfort is not only for the nation of Judah, but for us as well, who are in an exile of our own on this earth.

2. Why is it important to prepare the way of the Lord ?

In ancient times, when a king was entering a town, an advance team would go ahead to prepare the way and announce his coming, so that the whole city would not be caught unaware. In Africa, when a president is visiting a city, there is a lot of preparation, and a huge amount of money is spent to welcome the president. But we are talking about spiritual preparation which John the Baptist did in preparation for the coming of the messiah. John preached repentance and baptised people, so that they were prepared to receive King Jesus. John was a straight talker; he did not beat about the bush. He prepared the way of the Lord by introducing Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” and “the Chosen One of God”. He pointed more people to Jesus Christ so that they are saved.

We are now in the 2nd Sunday of Advent and Christians all over the world are busy preparing for Christmas events, Christmas carols, and holidays. There is nothing wrong with that, but real preparation should begin inside our hearts. The same way we get busy preparing for a very important person is the same way God desires that we should prepare our hearts and make room for the Lord our King, Jesus Christ.

3. The glory of the Lord is revealed to hearts that are prepared

When we make way for our Lord Jesus Christ, his glory is revealed. The glory of the Lord is not only revealed to the people of Jerusalem but to all. In Isaiah 40:5, “*all flesh shall see it together,*” Jew and Gentile alike, every tribe, tongue, people and nation in the kingdom of God. Similarly, Jesus is Christ is for all, and he will dwell in the hearts of those who prepare for him to come in.

4. How can we prepare for the King’s coming

The Lord is coming as a King, and hence we need to make way for him to move without problems, so every obstacle must be removed. As Christians, we prepare the way for the Lord to enter our hearts by repenting of our sins so that Christ can come in and make straight paths and holy temples of our lives. Preparing the Lord means creating an environment that is favorable for one to go and operate in one's life, or to make it easy for one to come and operate in one's life. To do this, we must remove every obstacle standing in the way of God operating in our lives. God is he is calling us today to once again clear the way before the coming of the Lord of the Harvest. We must prepare for God to come and dwell. We must cultivate a favorable atmosphere for God to operate in. It must be an atmosphere of worship and of faith. If someone hurts us, do not keep grudges; it is time to let go and forgive. Keeping grudges is also an obstacle for the King to dwell in your heart. Advent season is a time to forgive, a time to love the unlovable, a time to point others to Jesus Christ as John the Baptist did.

Conclusion

- **There is comfort in Christ**, in whatever situation you find yourself; in every affliction, every moment of pain, every time of joy and triumph, Christ is there, and he will never fail because he is the comforter of all comforters
- We should **prepare our hearts to receive him** through repentance of our sins, and this must be consistent. Our God is just to forgive us of all sins.
- **Forgive, let go of grudges, reconcile, show love and point others to Jesus Christ**

Reflection

Perhaps amidst busy schedules and Christmas events, pause and ask yourself? Do you really know the King who is coming? Has your heart been prepared to receive him? Have you come to this place repenting of your sin, seeking to do what pleases him? If you have become weary, this is the time to ask God to give you fresh oil that will enable you to prepare the way of the Lord for you and your household.

HYMN

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

CHARLES WESLEY (1707-1788) © PUBLIC DOMAIN

Gift Sunday Story: C4C

THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION:

Our Lord God and Father, we come to you as part of your family, both here in Reading, and throughout your world.

We hear and read about situations which give us cause for concern and even anger at the problems and difficulties people find themselves in, or even themselves inflict on others.

We pray for the victims of the fire in Hong Kong: those who have lost their homes and all their belongings; those who are mourning their friends and loved ones; those who still await news of their families. We pray your blessing on these and all the people who are now working to sort out the problems left by this tragedy.

We pray for countries devastated by floods: Indonesia, Sri Lanka and many other places in Asia and around the world. There is famine in many places, some caused by climate change and some by war and oppression: we think of Sudan, South Sudan, Gaza and so many other places which are of special care and concern to many of us personally.

We thank you for the caring work of many groups here in this country, and especially here in Reading. Today we remember, and show our support for, Concern4Calais and Reading Red Kitchen as we welcome them to our premises during the week and now today to our worship and this opportunity to share their concern for those in need in Reading, the UK and further afield.

We remember with gladness the witness we shared last Sunday as Amir, Mr Lo and Patrik were baptized; may they continue to be blessed in their faith as they continue in your love and care.

And finally we ask your blessing on all of us here today and on those we love. **Amen**

HYMN

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of His Word;
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!
Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done;
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;
His holy Name, the Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight;
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forevermore!

TIMOTHY DUDLEY-SMITH © 1962 HOPE PUBLISHING HOUSE

BENEDICTION

Go in peace love and care for one another in the name of Christ;
and may the power of the Holy Spirit make the rough places in your life smooth,
may the dark valleys of your hearts be filled and the rugged mountains levelled
and the way of the Lord be made ready in you, and may He come unto you
and bless you and shine forth from you both now and forevermore. Amen.

THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.



Events to highlight next week:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Wednesday 10 th | 10.30 | Renew Wellbeing |
| | 12.15 | Bible Study |
| | 2.00 | iCaf |
| Thursday 11 th | 10.30 | Bible study |
| | 10.30 | Toddlers |
| | 7.30 | Men's Bible Study |
| Friday 12 th | 5.00 | Table Tennis Club |

Sunday 14th December 10.30 Worship and Gift Sunday

Waiting for Inspiration

Isaiah 61:1-6; John 1:6-8



QR Code for Financial Offering:
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The future of Abbey

