

A Service of Lessons & Carols

Thursday 3rd December 2020



St Catharine's College Chapel

from Advent to Christmas

Introit: O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster, exspectatio gentium, et Salvator earum: veni ad salvandum nos, Domine Deus noster.

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, hope of the nations and their saviour: come and save us, O Lord our God.

Bidding

Beloved in Christ, be it this Christmastide our care and delight to hear again the message of the angels, and in heart and mind to go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, and the Babe lying in a manger. Therefore let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious redemption brought us by this Holy Child.

But first, let us pray for the needs of the whole world; for peace on earth and goodwill among all his people; for unity and brotherhood within the Church he came to build, and especially in this College, and this city and University of Cambridge.

And because this of all things would rejoice his heart, let us remember, in his name, the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed; the sick and them that mourn, the lonely and the unloved, the aged and the little children; all those who know not the Lord Jesus, or who love him not, or who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Lastly, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us, but upon another shore, and in a greater light, that multitude which no man can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, and with whom in the Lord Jesus we are for ever one.

These prayers and praises let us humbly offer up to the throne of heaven, in the words which Christ himself hath taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The first advent candle is lit

Carol: Hills of the North, rejoice

Hills of the North, rejoice,
Echoing songs arise,
Hail with united voice
He who made earth and skies:
He comes in righteousness and love,
He brings salvation from above.

Isles of the Southern seas,
Sing to the listening earth,
Carry on every breeze
Hope of a world's new birth:
In Christ shall all be made anew,
His word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the East, arise,
He is your brightest morn.
Greet him with joyous eyes,
Praise shall his path adorn:
The God whom you have longed to know
In Christ draws near, and calls you now.

Shores of the utmost West,
Land of the setting sun,
Welcome the heavenly guest
In whom the dawn has come:
He brings a never-ending light
Who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on,
Songs be in every mouth,
Lo, from the North they come,
From East and West and South:
In Jesus all shall find their rest,
In him the sons of earth be blest.

Words: based on C E Oakley, 1832-65
Music: Little Cornard, Martin Shaw, 1875-1958

Reading: from Isaiah 43.1-7

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia* and Seba in exchange for you.

Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you,

I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Do not fear, for I am with you;

I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you;

I will say to the north, 'Give them up',

and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away

and my daughters from the end of the earth—

everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory,

whom I formed and made.'

Choral Carol: A Cornerstone

A cornerstone precious, proved, founded in the fundament;

be thou strengthened, for I am with thee

Christopher Fox

Words: Isaiah 28.16 and Haggai 2.4

Collect

Almighty God,

you hold the universe in your embrace,

and love everything that is made:

bring your scattered children home,

bring peace among all peoples

and unite us in cherishing

one another and the world. Amen

The second Advent candle is lit

Carol: Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending
Swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluya!
God appears, on earth to reign.

Those dear tokens of his passion
Still his dazzling body bears,
Cause of endless exultation
To his ransomed worshippers:
With what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars.

Yea, Amen! Let all adore thee,
High on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory:
Claim the kingdom for thine own:
O come quickly!
Alleluya! Come, Lord, come!

Charles Wesley, 1707-88

Reading: Micah 5.2-5

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

Reading: Hope

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Emily Dickinson

Collect

Almighty God,
you bring about your purposes
in the small and the vulnerable:
may we also honour
those whom the world ignores,
and, in duty and in joy,
play our part in the building
of your kingdom of mercy,
justice and peace. Amen.

The third advent candle is lit

Carol: O little town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive him, still
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.

Words: Bishop Phillips Brooks
Music: English Traditional melody
harmonised by Ralph Vaughan Williams
Descant by Thomas Armstrong

Reading: Luke 1.26-39

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

Choral Carol: Candlelight Carol

How do you capture the wind on the water?
How do you count all the stars in the sky?
How can you measure the love of a mother?
Or how can you write down a baby's first cry?

*Candlelight, angel light, firelight and star-glow
Shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn
Gloria! Gloria in excelsis deo
Angels are singing; the Christ child is born.*

Shepherds and wise men will kneel and adore him
Seraphim round him their vigil will keep
Nations proclaim him their Lord and their Saviour
But Mary will hold him and sing him to sleep

Find him at Bethlehem laid in a manger
Christ our Redeemer asleep in the hay
Godhead incarnate and hope of salvation
A child with his mother that first Christmas Day.

Collect

Almighty God,
the birth of your Son at Bethlehem
draws us to kneel in wonder
at heaven touching earth.
Make us watchful for the signs of your kingdom
in the forgotten corners of this and every land,
that we may see Christ in one another
and love as he loves us. Amen.

The fourth advent candle is lit

Reading: Luke 2.1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Choral Carol: Away in a manger

Away in a manger, now crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by me side until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
Close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

Reading: Luke 2.8-20

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

'Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Choral Carol: Ding dong merrily on high

Ding dong! merrily on high,
in heaven the bells are ringing,
Ding dong! Verily the sky
Is riv'n with angels singing.
Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

E'en so here below below
Let steeple bells be swungen,
And i-o i-o i-o
by priest and people sungen.
Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

Pray you, dutifully prime
Your matin chime, ye ringers;
May you beautifully rime
Your evetime song, ye singers.
Gloria! Hosanna in excelsis!

Trad., arr. Malcolm Williamson

Reading: Ring out, wild bells

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Collect

Almighty God,
In the incarnation you showed
that with you all things are possible,
even that we, on earth, might join
with choirs of angels in the joy of heaven.
As we look on the enormity of the world's sufferings,
lead us from despair to hope,
and strengthen us for the part you are calling us to play
in your work of love for the world. Amen.

Choir Carol: The truth from above

This is the truth sent from above,
The truth of God, the God of love;
Therefore don't turn me from your door,
But hearken all, both rich and poor.

The first thing, which I do relate, That God at first did man create The next thing, which to you I tell, Woman was made with him to dwell.	Thus we were heirs to endless woes, Till God the Lord did interpose For so a promise soon did run That He'd redeem us with a Son.
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And at this season of the year
Our blest Redeemer did appear
He here did live, and here did preach,
And many thousands He did teach.

Thus He in love to us behaved,
To show us how we must be saved
And if you want to know the way
Be pleased to hear what He did say.

Trad., arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams

Reading: John 1.1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The final candle is lit

Carol: O come, all ye faithful

O come, all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye
To Bethlehem.
Come and behold him
Born the King of angels.
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him
Christ the Lord.

God of God, Light of light,
Lo, he abhors not the virgin's womb,
Very God, begotten not created.
O come..

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!
Sing, all the citizens of heaven above.
Glory to God in the highest.
O come...

Words: *Adeste Fideles* tr. F Oakley and W T Brooke
Music: composer unknown, arr. David Willcocks

Blessing

May God himself, the God of peace,
make you perfect and holy,
and keep you safe and blameless, in spirit, soul and body,
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;
This Christmas time may the joy of the angels,
the courage of Mary, the faith of Joseph
and the peace of the Christ-child be yours;
and the blessing of God almighty
the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost,
Be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Voluntary: Chorale Prelude on In Dulci Jubilo

J S Bach

The choirs' latest recording
'Alpha & O: Music for Advent and Christmas'
is available on Spotify and the Resonus Classics label