

At Home Service for Sunday 27th November 2022
Prepared by Rene Chambers

We come to the season of advent when we celebrate the birth of Jesus in a stable, a lowly place but a place where there is room for all from lowly shepherds to high born kings, **all are welcome.**

We sing with Mary:

*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.*

*From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.*

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel remembering to be merciful

to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.

Let us sing:

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

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

I'll never know how much it cost

To see my sin upon that cross

I'll never know how much it cost

To see my sin upon that cross

And I'll never know how much it cost

To see my sin upon that cross
No, I'll never know how much it cost

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

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
Wonderful wonderful
Yes, You are God

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

Tim Hughes

Let us pray:

We come together, though in our own homes, yet united in Spirit, to worship and to meet with Almighty God, to give Him thanks and praise, to ask his mercy and forgiveness and to bring our petitions to Him. We are thankful for his arms open wide to embrace everyone regardless of age, gender, race or status, for his unconditional love and that he is always for us. Thank you Lord for your son Jesus Christ, the author of our salvation, which he paid for by suffering and dying on a cross so that we might live forever in His Kingdom. For everything we are truly thankful. Amen.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

Then the King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of one of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matt 25:35-40.

Reflection

The cover of the Autumn issue of The Connexion shows a photograph of refugees crossing from Turkey to Lesbos in a very overcrowded small open boat, similar to the ones we see so often on the news being picked up in the Channel. We've all seen and heard numerous horrific stories of drownings when flimsy crafts capsize trying to make it to our shores. The editor, David Perry, begins his message with the familiar and much loved passage from Luke 2:6-7 (The Message version) which we will all hear and read again in the coming weeks, *While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the hostel.* The use of the word

hostel rather than the traditional *inn* transports us more easily to the twenty-first century and helps us to see the similarity between Mary's dilemma and the dilemma of the desperate refugees and immigrants arriving on our shores. David asks the question, Is there room for them where we are?

Many say, "No, we're full already." On one hand, it's understandable, we live on a crowded island. True, there is a housing shortage, but there is also a labour shortage. At the moment there are 79.5 million people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes, of these 26 million are refugees. (Jpit.uk/refugees) Those that arrive here are being portrayed as a huge financial burden and a threat to the job market in order to justify desperate measures to get rid of the problem. Those seeking to set fear among the population about the numbers arriving almost always fail to balance that with figures of those leaving and also fail to point out that "Ultimately migrants and refugees provide an overall benefit to the UK economy, boosting tax revenues and providing labour."(jpit.uk/refugees) It is worth remembering that many are forced to migrate from countries where climate change has left their countries uninhabitable even though those countries have contributed least to the causes of climate change.

As followers of Jesus Christ we are called to see things from God's perspective, not those of a worldly capitalist. So often God's perspective opposes the world view and the views of those in authority. It's not surprising, after all, Jesus came to show a different way, to usher in a different kind of kingdom. God's kingdom acts through love, justice and mercy. Jesus constantly spoke truth to power. He took on the religious, political and secular authorities. The message of Jesus and its conflict with the world view is just as stark today as it has ever been. It's no wonder then, as Christians, we often find ourselves at odds with the views of the authorities. We, as Christ's voice and hands on earth are called to speak truth to power too. Sometimes it requires us to act in counter intuitive ways and throw ourselves on God's provision. If it's God's will he will open doors. Instead of hardening our hearts, we are called to trust in Him, to enlarge our tent and make room for all.

Let us sing again.

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice
which is more than liberty.

2 There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more keenly felt than heaven:
there is no place where earth's failings
have such gracious judgement given.

3 There is plentiful redemption
through the blood that Christ has shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the head.

4 For the love of God is broader
than the measure of our mind;
and the heart of the eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

5 If our love were but more simple,
we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined,
by the glory of the Lord.

Frederick William Faber



A Prayer for Refugees

God, creator of all,
For people who are displaced;
may they find a safe refuge.

For people who have lost control of their lives;
may they know a sure foundation.

For people who live in fear;
may they be given a strong fortress.

For people who are disillusioned;
may they have hope in a future.

Loving Father, in times of crisis, sorrow and
uncertainty;
we ask that you draw near. Amen.

This prayer was written by All We Can. All We Can work closely with refugees in different countries across the world. You can find the full resource, with biblical reflections and even recipes at www.allwecan.org.uk



Prayers of Intercession

Thank you Lord that there is room for all of us in God's story. Help us to make room for others in our country and in our lives. At home help us to support each other through this winter as many will struggle with heating bills and food bills. We pray for world leaders to pursue diplomacy and dialogue to settle disputes rather than wars. We pray for those countries where populations are oppressed by their rulers, where there is injustice and inequality, where people do not have normal freedoms and basic human rights. We pray for those areas of the world where poverty is the norm, where the effects of global warming are so severe that people are forced to leave their homes in search of a better future. We hold before you all those we know who are ill, in pain, bereaved, suffering from anxiety and depression. May they know your comfort and healing. We pray for peace in our world, peace in our homes, peace in our hearts. Amen

Our final hymn is about the love, mercy and grace of God.

1 Here is love, vast as the ocean,
loving-kindness as the flood,
when the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten
throughout heav'n's eternal days.

2 On the mount of crucifixion
fountains opened deep and wide;
through the floodgates of God's mercy
flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
poured incessant from above,
and heav'n's peace and perfect justice
kissed a guilty world in love.

3 In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
by Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
and Thy grace my need is meeting
as I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
Thy great love and pow'r on me
without measure, full and boundless,
drawing out my heart to Thee.

William Rees