



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
27 December 2020



Welcome

Welcome to Last Sunday Praise. In this file you will find links to the songs we have chosen for our worship. Click on the links to take you to each song.

Introduction

Our theme for this service on the last Sunday of a very difficult year is 'Hope'. We have all experienced some measure of loneliness during the pandemic, whether it has been through lack of family contact, lack of normal social interaction or lack of face to face workplace chat. Basically we've missed companionship beyond our immediate household, and that can so easily lead to depression and hopelessness. But our theme is hope, and we have good reason to hope – we believe in a God who loves us and cares deeply about us. So let's take some time to praise and worship God, starting with three songs of praise.

♪♪ All the songs link to YouTube. Just click with your mouse on the link, which will take you to a song with on-screen words. You may have to skip a few YouTube adverts if we have chosen songs that are not currently on the Chet Valley Churches YouTube channel.

♪♪ Light of the World

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYsR49ReAj4>

♪♪ Faithful One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxviwvjyglw>

♪♪ Like a candle flame

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teZaQUKjx24&t=41s>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

These songs all declare that God cares about us enough to come and live as one of us. It's a tremendous thought, and while we may not fully understand how God could do this, we celebrate it every year at Christmas. God has chosen to identify with our earthliness in order that we might be part of his holiness. It's a promise for everyone, whoever and wherever you may be. The following prayer is very concisely written. Think about it carefully.

The Collect is a special prayer written for each day. Perhaps you might read the prayer aloud, line by line, stopping to think about each line as you do so.

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

God in Trinity,
eternal unity of perfect love:
gather the nations to be one family,
and draw us into your holy life
through the birth of Emmanuel,
our Lord Jesus Christ.

♪♪ My hope is built on nothing less

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DohxO6ytsaU&list=PL-Wo7lu6CksuTKdkFbx68JxCo0xmtG8IA&index=8>

♪♪ There is a hope

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVUfNEwRPno>

🎵 **All my hope on God is founded**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DohxO6ytsaU&list=PL-Wo7lu6CksuTKdkFbx68JxCo0xmtG8IA&index=8>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

We praise God for the hope that we have in Jesus. We look beyond the twinkly lights and decorations and find a simple story of hope. Yet while the story may be one that children can understand from an early age, it is entirely timeless and ageless. We marvel at the birth of Jesus – let us never lose that sense of awe and wonder.

Perhaps you might like to ponder the following prayer.

A prayer for our lives

Heavenly Father,

Forgive us for the times when we are caught up in all the busyness of life and especially of Christmas and forget that you're there,

forgive us for being grumpy when we have you to care about us, forgive us for letting our minds wander when we worship, or our eyes droop when we pray.

Teach us to be content with what we have, and to care for those who do not have enough,

and teach us to make time to be your holy people.

🎵 **What kind of greatness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KIWfUR07xc>

🎵 On Christmas Day

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beH5ZqDDu90>

Bible Reading

Luke 2 . 21 - 38

²¹ On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

²² When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”),
²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Talk

Paul Mizen has written this reflection.

We've reached a time often referred to as 'Twixmas', generally defined as the period between Christmas and the New Year, or at least in a normal year. Now I do know that in the Church calendar, Christmas officially continues until Candlemas Day, 2nd February, the day that celebrates Jesus being presented in the temple. In a church I used to play at occasionally, the Rector there always insisted on keeping their large Nativity set out until then.

Of course, this is not a normal year. In the last issue of 'Contact', David wrote 'It's Christmas, but not as we know it.' I don't imagine when he first wrote that, or we first read it, that any of us could have imagined just how different and difficult this Christmas would prove. Many talked about Christmas being

cancelled. On the day of the Prime Minister's announcement of Christmas gatherings being limited to 1 day, there was a post on Facebook saying 'only 371 sleeps until Christmas!' Yet Christmas wasn't cancelled. It was still the time to give thanks to God for the amazing gift of His Son. So however different our celebrations were this year, what can we still learn about God intervening in human history and about the passage we read.

Since preaching on the theme of 'Hope' on Advent Sunday, that theme seems to have been with me all over this time; the hope that came into the world, the hope that is for these present days and the eternal hope to come. We need to remember that when the bible uses the word 'hope' it isn't exactly in the way we do today. We may say I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow; I hope I get some nice presents for my birthday, or more sincerely, I hope this pandemic will soon come to an end. However, the way we say such things implies there is some doubt as to whether what we hope for will happen.

When the bible talks about 'hope', it refers to something that is certain. Hebrews 6 v19 tells us 'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.' That's the hope I want to think of. One of our Christmas carols reminds us that 'the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight.'

Up to the time of Jesus' birth, there had been a period of about 400 years, referred to as the Silent Years. This was a period when it seemed there were no prophets and very few genuinely seeking God. The leaders of Judaism had reduced worship to a set of rules and rituals. It was into such a world of no hope that God sent His Son, the Hope of the world to bring hope and salvation to everyone who would believe in Him.

Yet God didn't send His Son in a way most people thought He would. He wasn't born in a palace, or to a rich family, but to Mary & Joseph. The rules for this purification ceremony are laid

out it Leviticus 12. The offering made here for Jesus was the offering for a poor couple, not a rich couple. That was where God had sent His Son, to a poor family, so as to start from a humble birth.

Yet this was 'Hope' coming into the world. Anna, in Luke 2 v38, speaks about Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem, or hoping for the redemption of Jerusalem. Of course, most would have known the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah that God would send.

Sadly, many just thought he would be someone who would throw out the Roman army and they didn't have any spiritual perspective to his coming. But Anna and others had that real hope, which was rewarded. God had sent His Son, the Messiah, not just as a baby, but to be the Saviour of the world.

How does He bring us hope today and particularly in the midst of a global pandemic? The world's hopes are set on the successful roll out of vaccines against Covid 19. I have to say that I very much see God's hand in the way the vaccines have been developed so quickly. But the truth is that for many individuals and countries, the financial consequences of the pandemic may be with us for years. If our hope is in our wealth, it will fail. There's a song that says 'Jesus is the answer for the world today, above Him there's no other, Jesus is the way.' Our only true hope is in Jesus to help us through this life and into eternity.

Jesus came to give us eternal hope. How much of our thoughts just focus on this life and how much on eternal life? Compared with eternity, our time in this life is miniscule. Are we ready to meet Jesus when He comes or calls?

I'm not belittling the sadness of losing a loved one. But the promises of God to those who trust Him are so great. I just

love these words of Simeon in vv 29-32, which we call the Nunc Dimittis. He had been promised that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Rather than fearing that day, he rejoices in it. Perhaps central to what he says are these words 'Dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.' His life was complete and he wanted to go to be in the nearer presence of the Lord he loved.

So how will we move on from this Christmas? I remember seeing a Nativity Play in our last church. All the usual characters were on stage, but there were 2 girls in the balcony looking down on the scene and cooing at the new baby in a way it seems only mothers can. At a point, Mary picked up Jesus from the manger. One of the onlookers said 'Oh no, don't disturb him.' Mary came back with the poignant line, 'you can't leave Jesus in the manger.' Sadly many do.

If the story of Jesus was only about a baby, we would be without hope. But praise God that Jesus went on to die on the cross for our sins and more than that conquered death by rising again. That is what brings us hope. If our trust is in Him, then we have a hope for this life, whatever it may throw at us. We also have a hope that when this life comes to an end, as hard as that parting may be, then like Simeon, we can depart in peace, because we have seen the Lord's salvation.

May He be our hope for the coming days, the coming year and forever.

♪ From the squalor of a borrowed stable

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YksTeR6lOI>

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- The people we live amongst – family, neighbours, friends far or near, acquaintances
- Our church leaders who have to find a way through the rules about Covid and enable the church to live and grow
- Members of church congregations who are no longer able to worship together, and are finding it tough going
- People we know who are struggling as a result of Covid, either socially or economically or because of long term effects on their health
- Those who have lost touch with society following isolation and are afraid to venture out
- Those who are ill, either with the coronavirus or other ailments that don't hit the news bulletins
- Ourselves, that we might be brave enough to stand out as people of faith

And a prayer for hope and forgiveness:

Almighty God, Author of life,
Lord of all creation, from whom comes the beauty of each
flower bud and every new born child,
thank you for your everlasting forgiveness and eternal hope.
You turn the pages of our lives, filling everyday with forgiveness,
erasing our failings and encouraging us to try again.
You are the author of life, who brings fresh expectation into
each day.
Come flood this heart with your hope.
Amen.

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples. Use whatever version or language you wish!

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

🎵 **Born in the night**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwiZJqiB4KA>

🎵 **This Child**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3qdkCP7Z8>

🎵 **Rejoice, rejoice**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwtLsQ-HYJY>

A blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.
Amen