



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 3 January 2021
Second Sunday after Christmas

Music to prepare us for worship

Das alte Jahn vergangen ist (The Old Year Has Passed) BWV 614 from the 'Orgelbuchlein' - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750); *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ (Praise to You, Jesu Christ)* BWV 604 from the 'Orgelbuchlein' - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750); *Praeambulium supra Jesu, meine Freude (Perambulation upon 'Jesu, My Joy)* - Johann Ludwig Krebs (1713-1780); *Puer Nobis Nascitur (A Boy is Born to Us)* - Jean Francois Dandrieu (1682-1738) played by Peter Stockwell

Welcome

Call to worship

Kia noho a Ihowa ki a koutou. May God be with you.

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Blessed be God! In Christ we are blessed, in Christ we are chosen,

to live in the praise of God's glorious grace!

In Christ we belong in the whanau, adopted

to live in the praise of God's glorious grace!

In Christ the great mystery of God is revealed;

to live in the praise of God's glorious grace!

Blessed be God!

Hymn

(tune: O Waly, waly) - Iona Community

1 The God of all eternity,
Unbound by space yet always near,
Is present where his people meet
To celebrate the coming year.

2 God does not share our doubts or
fears,
Nor shrinks from the unknown or
strange:
The one who fashioned heaven and
earth
Makes all things new and ushers
change.

3 Let faith or fortune rise or fall,
Let dreams and dread both have their
day;
Those whom God loves walk unafraid
With Christ their Guide and Christ their
way.

4 God grant that we, in this new year,
May show the world the Kingdom's
face,
And let our work and worship thrive
As signs of hope and means of grace.

Prayer, assurance of forgiveness

E te whanau, in Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Kia tau te rangimarie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou. May the peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Children

Hymn

(tune: CM) CH4 308 - Thomas Pestel

1 Behold, the great Creator makes
himself a house of clay,
in human flesh, our form he takes
which he will bear away.

3 This wonder all the world amazed,
it shook the starry frame;
the hosts of heaven stood to gaze,
and bless the Saviour's name.

2 Hark, how the wise eternal Word
as a weak infant cries!
In form of servant is the Lord,
and God in cradle lies.

4 Join then, all hearts that are not stone,
to sing with choirs above
and celebrate this holy One,
the God of peace and love.

Readings – Listen for God’s Word to us ...

Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church **Thanks be to God**

John 1:10-18

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, ‘This was he of whom I said, “He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.” ’)
From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.

This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ **Praise to Christ the Word**

Reflection “In a new year, praise?”

I like the music where you hear an initial theme, the sequence of a few notes, and then from time to time it reappears throughout the piece, anchoring the music, developing movement, holding it together. As we enter 2021, I wonder what that theme is for you. For the writer of Ephesians it is blessedness: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing ...” Addressed to the church at Ephesus, but like a circular letter for every congregation at every time. The writer is captivated by blessedness, so captivated that the first part of the letter is one long sentence with clause after clause, as if it is to be read breathlessly, without interruption, not as our Bibles have it with full stops, as blessing is added to blessing, this, then this, then this as one blessing after another piles on, rolling on, washing over us, carrying us forward, telling us of how much our lives are affected by God with us, the water we swim in, the air we breathe, the sequence of notes that just keep sounding in life. Something like this ... God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be made whole before God in love; destined us for adoption as God’s children through Jesus Christ, redeemed and forgiven according to God’s grace lavished on us; making known to us the mystery of God’s will, as a plan for the fulfilment of time, to gather up all things in Christ; bequeathing us a destiny, a purpose, to live for the praise of God; to hear the word of truth, the gospel of our saving, marked with a seal, an absolute assurance of the Holy Spirit, towards our redeeming as God’s own people for the praise of God. No wonder preachers have gone clause by clause, meticulously explaining one after the other, unpicking and exploring each thread. John is more succinct - “From the fulness of Christ we have all received, grace upon grace.”

If blessedness is a theme for life, we will keep finding it. In the music of creation, we will keep hearing the sequence, if we pause to listen. There is a marvellous writer who in her novels constantly points to signs of blessedness. I have just finished reading her latest novel Jack. Her name is Marilynne Robinson. If you read her Pulitzer-prize winning novel, Gilead, then you know that she is on the lookout for the blessedness that lurks in the everyday. Along those lines, she thinks that the person who invented the garden sprinkler did something far lovelier than just provide an easy way to water grass. Because sprinklers expose water droplets to sunlight, and in that shimmering moment, we see each drop not as the stuff we use to do the dishes or mop the kitchen floor. No, we see that each drop is really a jewel, a mini-cathedral, as the light refracts to expose the dazzling rainbow that surrounds us. The essence of light and water is revealed in the self-same moment, and it reminds us of the glory that engulfs us daily, though we often miss it. “We have seen his glory,” John wrote. And he also wrote that the glory of that One is often missed. “He came to that which was his own and his own received him not.”

Now I am not speaking about being annoyingly and artificially positive, of cloying optimism. Christianity does not pretend there is no darkness. I am speaking of what underpins our living, of a spirit that is as deep in grieving as in thanking, in lament as in gratitude. Nor am I speaking of what we might naturally think of as blessing. Many have a long list. But there are others whose life seems far from blessed, people who suffer one thing after another, people dying from hunger and thirst, people whose families have been killed in war, people trapped in refugee camps. To speak of their lives as blessed seems cruel.

Ephesians speaks of blessedness as cosmic and communal, and points to what is shared, to our creation and destiny, to our identity and being chosen, to our redemption as humankind, to what we are promised and which we are called to share. Blessedness is not for us to possess but to live into for the sake of the world. And it is not to sit up there, out there somewhere, although the concepts are strange to us, not our everyday language. So we have to unpack them.

In that sense, then, these clauses can be prompts for us, invitations to meditate, to wonder about, to watch for, to notice the droplets on our garden leaves. God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be made whole before God in love. Destined us for adoption as God’s children through Jesus Christ, redeemed and forgiven according to God’s grace lavished on us. Making known to us the mystery of God’s will, as a plan for the fulfilment of time, to gather up all things in Christ. Bequeathing us a destiny, a purpose, to live for the praise of God. To hear the word of truth, the gospel of our saving, marked with a seal, an absolute assurance of the Holy Spirit, towards our redeeming as God’s own people for the praise of God.

Sitting with those words, with a candle lit, a cup of coffee, maybe with a bowl of water alongside, pondering what they might mean for each of us, about not just us, naming people for whom we pray that they might sense what these words might mean for them. Here is music we can listen for, a theme that sounds through our everyday lives, even when the music seems silent.

Martin Rinkart became the minister of the small German town of Eilenberg in 1618 just as the slaughter and chaos of the Thirty Years War was beginning. This was a period so catastrophic that the population of Germany fell from 16 million to 6 million over thirty years. Eilenberg was a walled city. It became a crowded haven for political and military refugees. This left the city vulnerable to disease and famine. In the year 1637 there was a terrible plague. Martin Rinkart was the only minister remaining in Eilenberg. He conducted 4000 funerals in that year, including up to 50 funerals a day. As the signs of peace began to emerge and the tide of slaughter, famine and plague began to recede in the 1640s, Martin Rinkart, who had lost half his household, including his wife, and could have been forgiven for feeling resentful, angry and unforgiving, sat down and wrote one of the most famous hymns in the German language which we know in English as "Now thank we all our God". Viewing the wreckage of war, and the folly of his fellow human beings, he nonetheless still saw the ultimate grace of God, which had given him life, had given him Jesus, had given him hope, had given him unlikely friends, and still gave him faith. He did the simple thing and just said thank you. Martin Rinkart was a person in whom the glory of God was revealed. And it was revealed through his ability and willingness, even amid untold suffering, to say thank you to the God of wonder and glory, who created us all, who suffers in our suffering, and who alone can raise us to new life. "From the fulness of God we have all received, grace upon grace."

Hymn

(tune: Dix) CH4 326 - William Chatterton Dix

1 As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onwards, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we
evermore be led to thee.

2 As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to thy lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before
thee, whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet
ever seek thy mercy-seat.

3 As they offered gifts most rare
at thy homely cradle bare;
so may we with holy joy,
pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee, our heavenly King.

4 In the heavenly country bright,
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer

Anglican prayer book

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the
glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.
Murua ō mātou hara,
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.

John Wesley Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Hymn

1 Come in, come in New Year
with shining summer day!
Your promise calls us here
to celebrate and pray,
through January's open door
to stride with hopeful step once more.

(tune: Darwalls 148th CH4 449) - Shirley Murray

2 Come in, New Year, and sell
your wares of chance and change:
engage us with your spell
to risk and re-arrange,
to feel the Spirit's impulse beat,
to follow down a different street.

3 For though December dies,
still Christmas keeps the light,
the hope in children's eyes,
the star that shatters night;
now Simeon and Anna see
the child who rules all time to be.

4 The calendar of Christ
will mark the seasons' turn,
his story claim our trust,
his love be ours to learn,
For all the world, for young and old,
we pray a year of peace unfold.

Offering – *Please place your offerings in the offering bags held out for you at the door as you leave. Please do this as soon as you are able.*

Benediction

Music for our leaving *Votre bonte grand dieu (Your Bounty Great God)* from '*Deuxieme Suite de Noels*' -
Claude-Benigne Balbastre (1727-1799)

Serving

Minister - Kerry Enright
Associate Minister - Jordan Redding
Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson
Reader - Geoff Swift
Prayer for others - Russell Thew
Welcoming team - Leigh Haslam's team
Counting team - Tony Haslam's team

In relation to your monetary offering, you may:

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318*
- *Give at the conclusion of the service.*