

## Happy New Year!

### CALL TO WORSHIP

‘Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God’ (Psalm 42:5-6).

### SONG: O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

[https://youtu.be/EiU\\_PO3JTuo](https://youtu.be/EiU_PO3JTuo)

**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:**

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;  
Glory to God in the highest:**

**Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,  
Born this happy morning,  
Jesus, to Thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father  
Now in flesh appearing:**

### OPENING PRAYER

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ, for you are the Lord of light and giver of life. We your faithful people come today to worship and adore you, for you are our Messiah, the Word incarnate. Help us in action and in truth to grasp the wonder of your incarnation, and the wonder of your presence with us.

### CONFESSION

Loving God, you have searched us and known us completely, our fears and

selfishness, our greed & thoughtlessness. Forgive us all our sins, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who became like us that we might become like him; to the glory of your holy name. **Amen.**

### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

The true light that gives light to everyone has come into the world. To all who receive him, he declares ‘Your sins are forgiven.’

**Amen. Glory to God in the highest.**

### OFFERTORY

Lord of light and life, giver of every good gift, we offer you the gifts we have given for the sake of your kingdom. We give what we have and all we are for the glory of your name throughout the earth. **Amen.**

### READING:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.<sup>2</sup> Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

(Genesis 1:1-2)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.<sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

(John 1:1-3)

### SONG: HOLY CHILD WHO CHOSE THE HEARTS OF MEN

<https://youtu.be/MZup1mkOeyI>

**Holy Child who chose the hearts of men  
To be His favoured home  
Leaving heaven’s gates for Bethlehem  
God came to call His own  
Now to us the highest King is born  
Behold the Royal Son  
Glory kneels to bind up all that’s torn  
The promised One has come**

Joy and pain as man He knew on earth  
No place to lay His head  
As a servant He embraced this world  
And on a cross He bled  
Having borne the deepest grief of man  
He rose to heaven's throne  
Now I'm sheltered in the Father's hand  
Until he calls me home

May the gift of God amaze us still  
The triumph of all time  
As His child I kneel to Heaven's will  
To make His purpose mine  
Though this road be scarred with trial  
and pain  
It's paved with lavish grace  
Knowing Him will be my greatest gain His  
throne my resting place

### REFLECTION: A FRESH START (1) In the beginning - John 1:1-3

We begin 2021 with a new sermon series called 'A fresh start.' I wonder how many people have ever wanted a fresh start, to begin again? Certainly, most people on the planet are hoping for a better 2021 than last year. The fresh start for us is taking a look at the great first chapter of John's gospel. We begin 'in the beginning.' As Julie Andrews sang in The Sound of Music, 'Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start.' So, let's start... and before you wonder about the song Julie Andrews sang, it's called 'Do re me.'

At the late-night Christmas Eve Communion, I explored this same passage of Scripture, John 1:1-3, and said then that John used a word about Christ at the beginning of his gospel that had meaning for both Jews and Greeks. For the Jews 'the Word' was active and powerful, and for the Greeks 'the Word' (logos) was the thing that brought reason and order to the world and enabled us to recognise truth. If you want to know more, do go to

the church website and to the late-night communion service. But today, here in the beginning of his gospel, John says four things about Christ.

#### Eternally Pre-existent

The first thing is that Christ, the Word, was there in the beginning. 'In the beginning was the Word.' John opens his gospel by echoing the account of creation found in Genesis (1:1). The Word was in the beginning. John uses an imperfect tense which means the Word was continuing to exist. Or as someone once put it, 'Jesus was always wasing!' In other words, there was never a time when Christ did not exist. John was writing about what theologians today call the pre-existence of Christ; that Christ existed before all things. What that means is that the Word was with God before time began.

Now this kind of thinking can give you a headache, but simply put it is about the greatness of Christ, who has always existed. No doubt you have heard people say they like Jesus but not the God of the Old Testament. What this says, if you flip it, is that God was always like Jesus. 'In the beginning was the Word.'

Are we enough like Jesus? This year let's make it our aim to be more like Jesus for the sake of those who are seeking truth and light.

#### Eternally in relationship

Secondly, John says 'the Word was with God.' Literally it says 'the Word was continually toward God.' John means that there has always been the closest relationship between God and the Word, between God and Christ. He is part of him yet distinct, like a word I speak is part of me, but it is also separate from me. John says that the Word he is talking about is a person, with God but distinguishable from

God, yet enjoying a personal relationship with God.

Let me illustrate this point. If you want to know something about me, who would you go and ask? Would you ask a casual acquaintance who knows little about me or would you go and ask Mandy? It is something like that which John is telling us about Jesus. He is saying that Christ has always been with God. Because of the closeness of their relationship, Jesus is the one person in the universe who can reveal to us what God is like. 'The Word was with God.'

This year let's make it our aim to deepen our relationship with Jesus, so that we have a greater understanding of the God we follow.

### **Eternally God**

Thirdly, John says 'the Word was God.' When John says the Word was God, he was not saying Jesus was a lot like God, but that Jesus was God. And yet the Word is not the entire Godhead, that is why he is with God and is God. The way John has written this first sentence in Greek means that God's Word was the same character and quality and essence of being as God. The Word was God, God's own self. The actions and words of Jesus are the actions and words of God. 'The Word was God.' This year let's make it our aim that our actions and words show Jesus in every way, just as Jesus' actions and words revealed God.

### **Eternally Creator**

Finally, Jesus is the Creator of the universe. John says 'Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.' Christ Jesus isn't a man with God-like characteristics, he is the one who created all things. As Paul says in his letter to the Colossians: 'All things were created by him and for him and in him all things hold

together' (Col. 1:16-17). Or as the writer to the Hebrews puts it, 'in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word' (Heb. 1:2-3). What John and others are saying here is that Christ is the Eternal Creator.

[NOTE CHECKED AFTER SERMON RECORDED]: There are about 100 billion stars in the average galaxy and at least 100 million galaxies in the known universe. That means there are 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars in space (10 octillion, or 10 with 27 zeros). And Jesus created them all! This year let's make it our aim to recognise Jesus in his creation, and to go to him for sustenance in these difficult times.

### **Conclusion**

The question of 'who Jesus is' is the fundamental question of the Christian faith. That is why John begins his gospel with these words which tell us about Jesus: that God has always been like Jesus that Jesus has always been with God, that Jesus is God, and Jesus is the Creator of the universe.

That's probably enough to try and grasp this morning. Let's pray.

### **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, Word of God incarnate, help us to wonder at your majesty and marvel at your humility. May we know you more and more in this coming year, for your glory's sake. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Jesus, incarnate Lord

**Hear us we pray.**

Glory to God in the highest, for you are incarnate among us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Lord God, we give you thanks and praise that you gave the wonderful gift of your Son to be our Saviour. Help us to know your presence in our lives and in our homes.

Jesus, incarnate Lord, **hear us we pray.**

We rejoice with the worldwide Church in celebrating your love for us in Jesus. We ask your blessing on those Churches where there is opposition and persecution at this time. May they know they are not forgotten by us, their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus, incarnate Lord, **hear us we pray.**

We give thanks for your eternal promise of peace and goodwill. We remember before you those suffering hatred in its many forms: violence, war, famine, discrimination. We pray for all who this Christmas time feel fearful or neglected or hated.

Jesus, incarnate Lord, **hear us we pray.**

We thank you that you understand family life and experienced childhood in an ordinary home. We ask your blessing on our families, all those we love. We pray for all who have been separated from homes or loved ones. Lord we pray for Mark and family with his/their mum in hospital. May they know your love, peace, and protection at this testing time.

Jesus, incarnate Lord, **hear us we pray.**

We thank you that you came to restore what was broken and give life in all its fullness. We remember those who are ill and for those who have no joy in life. We pray for those who are fearful of the future

and unable to cope with the present. May they know you came to heal and save.

Jesus, incarnate Lord, **hear us we pray.**

Finally, Lord, we give thanks that our worship is united with all the worship on earth and in heaven. We thank and praise you that you came for our salvation. So, we remember our loved ones who have died, and hold before you those who mourn.

Jesus, incarnate Lord, **hear us we pray.**

**Merciful Father accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name  
Your kingdom comes  
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  
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**

#### **SONG: SEE, AMID THE WINTER'S SNOW**

<https://youtu.be/xlQTIN2HOAg>

**See, amid the winter's snow,  
Born for us on earth below,  
See, the Lamb of God appears,  
Promised from eternal years.**

***Hail, thou ever-blessèd morn!  
Hail, redemption's happy dawn!  
Sing through all Jerusalem:  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!***

**Lo, within a manger lies  
He who built the starry skies,  
He who throned in height sublime**

**Sits amid the cherubim.**

**Sacred Infant, all divine,  
What a tender love was Thine,  
Thus, to come from highest bliss  
Down to such a world as this!**

**Teach, O teach us, holy Child,  
By Thy face so meek and mild,  
Teach us to resemble Thee  
In Thy sweet humility.**

#### **CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING**

Lord of creation, you came among us revealing your plan of salvation, formed before the creation of the world. Fill us with joy and peace as we begin this new year, that we may walk in the joy of your salvation, now and always. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you and all whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**