

CAMEL-ALLEN BENEFICE  
WORSHIP AT HOME  
ADVENT 4  
20 DECEMBER 2020



## INTRODUCTION

In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

Welcome to our service on this last Sunday of Advent.

We light the Advent candles, in our mind's eye if we do not have any to hand, saying:

**1<sup>st</sup> candle:** we light this candle as a sign that the word of God is ever present in the world

**2<sup>nd</sup> candle:** we light this candle as a sign that in life's rough places we are called to prepare the way for our God

**3<sup>rd</sup> candle:** we light this candle as a sign that in the darkness of the struggle for life, the Light of all the world in every generation is surely coming

**4<sup>th</sup> candle:** we light this candle as a sign that God conceives and creates in barren places, that new life will arise within the empty wombs of life, for nothing is impossible with God



We pray, by the light of the Advent candles:

Heavenly Father,  
You exalted the humble and meek:  
Give us humble and contrite hearts.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus,  
You grew towards birth in the Virgin's womb:  
Be planted also in our hearts and lives.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit,  
You overshadowed Mary,  
That she might become the God-bearer:  
Fill us with your heavenly gifts.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Look up and raise your heads, because  
your redemption is drawing near

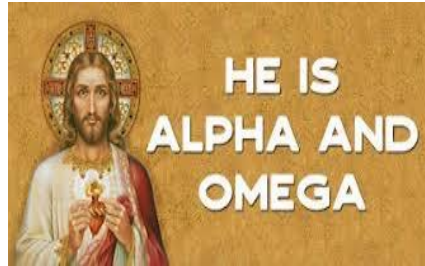


## HYMN

Of the Father's love begotten  
ere the worlds began to be,  
he is Alpha and Omega,  
he the source, the ending he,  
of the things that are, that have been,  
and that future years shall see,  
evermore and evermore.

O that birth for ever blessed,  
when the Virgin, full of grace,  
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,  
bare the Saviour of our race,  
and the babe, the world's Redeemer,  
first revealed his sacred face,  
evermore and evermore.

O ye heights of heaven, adore him;  
angel hosts, his praises sing;  
powers, dominions bow before him,  
and extol our God and King;  
let no tongue on earth be silent,  
every voice in concert ring,  
evermore and evermore.



## WE SAY SORRY AND SEEK FORGIVENESS

When the Lord comes,  
He will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness,  
And will disclose the purposes of the heart.  
Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Lord of grace and truth,  
We confess our unworthiness  
To stand in your presence as your children.  
We have sinned:  
**Forgive and heal us.**

The Virgin Mary accepted your call  
To be the mother of Jesus.  
Forgive our disobedience to your will.  
We have sinned:  
**Forgive and heal us.**

Your Son our Saviour  
Was born in poverty in a manger.  
Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.  
We have sinned:  
**Forgive and heal us.**

The shepherds left their flocks  
To go to Bethlehem.  
Forgive our self interest and lack of vision.  
We have sinned:  
**Forgive and heal us.**

The wise men followed the star  
To find Jesus the King.  
Forgive our reluctance to seek you.  
We have sinned:  
**Forgive and heal us.**

Almighty God,  
Who in Jesus Christ has given us  
A kingdom that cannot be destroyed,  
Forgive us our sins,  
Open our eyes to God's truth,  
Strengthen us to do God's will  
And give us the joy of his Kingdom,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*We bring our own prayers before God in silence for a moment and then pray in the words of the Collect:*

Eternal God,  
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,  
so we wait for his coming in glory;  
bring us through the birth pangs of this present age  
to see, with her, our great salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*The first reading: 2 Samuel 7: 1 – 11, 16*

7 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.



## Psalm 130

Out of the depths I have called to you, Lord.  
Let your ears be open to hear my voice.

**My hope is in God's word.**

If you recorded all our sins  
Who could come before you?

**My hope is in God's word.**

There is forgiveness with you:  
Therefore you shall be feared.

**My hope is in God's word.**

My soul is longing for the Lord,  
More than those who watch for daybreak.

**My hope is in God's word.**

O Israel, wait for the Lord,  
For with the Lord there is mercy.

**My hope is in God's word.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**My hope is in God's word.**

*The second reading: Romans 16: 25 > end*

<sup>25</sup> Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup> but is now

disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— <sup>27</sup> to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

## Hymn

In the bleak midwinter,  
frosty wind made moan,  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
snow on snow,  
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.



Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;  
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.  
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, Whom cherubim, worship night and day,  
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for Him, Whom angels fall before,  
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;  
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,  
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

## The Gospel: Luke 1: 26 – 38

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

## REFLECTION

On this, the last Sunday in Advent in this difficult year of 2020, when worshipping from home in the relative safety of our kitchens or sitting rooms has become a regular activity for many of us, often in place of attending public worship in church, our Old Testament reading from the second book of Samuel is particularly appropriate.

Until the discovery of the Tel Dan stele dating from the 9th century BC and referring to the "House of David", many people thought that King David was just a legendary figure. Thus, whilst some of his

reported exploits may have a legendary quality to them, David was a real person who, according to the Biblical account, successfully united Israel as a kingdom after the failures of Israel's first king, Saul.

In our passage today, David is already secure in his kingdom and his monarchy. Our passage begins by emphasising that David was now settled in his house ~ perhaps bearing the double meaning of a physical building and a dynasty ~ and at rest from all his enemies. With these worldly concerns behind him, David turns his mind to God and seems troubled that he is living in a palace, a "house of cedar", as he puts it: but the ark of God, the ark which the Israelites had carried with them through the desert out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, remains in a tent, as it had been throughout all those years in the wilderness and since settling in Canaan, centuries earlier.



David is concerned that he is now living in relative luxury but God is not. So David conceives the idea of building a house for God.

But, God tells David through the prophet, Nathan, that he has never asked for a house to live in: this is not something that God needs or



even desires. Ever since Solomon, David's son, built his great Temple in the following generation, fulfilling his father's ambition, we have consistently built houses for God, in the form of Temples, Churches, Mosques. We build them out of the best of motives but, to some extent, they are all an attempt to bring God down to our level, to confine him to a scale we can comprehend and get our heads around. Our Churches are wonderful places, many imbued with centuries of sacred worship, and, therefore, to be treasured for what they are: but, let us remember the message which God spoke to David through Nathan, that God is not to be found or confined in any one place.

The Spirit of God is constantly on the move among us and we can find him not only in Church but in our own homes or, indeed, anywhere at all. Sometimes, it is the sight of the waves crashing on the cliff face below; or of majestic snow covered mountains; sometimes the wonder we feel at just a little corner of creation by a twinkling brook, its banks bursting with wildflowers, buzzing insects and, perhaps, a fleeting glimpse of a rabbit, or an otter or a kingfisher; or a clear night sky filled with the countless constellations of the vast created universe which not only bring us closer to God than at other times, but also make us realise the folly of David in thinking that God needs or wants a house in which to dwell, or that he could ever be confined there. How could the creator of the universe be confined to a house, or a nation or a planet, or a solar system, or even a galaxy, when it was he who, from a place beyond space and time, brought them all into existence?

We may want to comprehend God, and that is understandable: but, in order to do so, we have to box him in and confine him to within the range of limited human experience and intellect. Would we not do better to acknowledge that, ultimately, God is beyond our understanding and that all our attempts to restrict him to human standards, as David thought he could do, are doomed to fail?

God, you notice, gently turned around David's wish to build a house for him. I took you from being a shepherd to being a prince over Israel and vanquished your enemies, God told him: making plain that it was not David but God himself who had brought David to his position of even being able to offer building a house for God. God said, that he would, instead, make David a house ~ in the sense of a dynasty which would last forever.

And this promise is picked up in our Gospel reading because, when Mary learned that she was to be the mother of God, she was engaged, Luke tells us, to Joseph, of the house of David. The promise of a house of David which would last forever was to be fulfilled in the son which she was to bear at the first Christmas, of whose kingdom, there is, and will be, no end.

## **WE AFFIRM OUR FAITH**

We say together in faith:

**Holy, holy, holy  
Is the Lord God Almighty  
Who was, and is, and is to come.**

We believe in God the Father, who created all things:  
**For by his will they were created  
And have their being.**

We believe in God the Son,  
Who was slain:  
**For with his blood,  
He purchased us for God,  
From every tribe and language,  
From every people and nation.**

We believe in God the Holy Spirit:  
**The Spirit and the Bride say “Come!”**  
**Even so come, Lord Jesus!**  
**Amen.**



## OUR PRAYERS

We pray for the coming of God’s Kingdom, saying  
Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Lord, you bring salvation to all who will hear your word, whoever and wherever they be.

Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Grant us the faith and trust in you that was in Mary when she agreed to receive the Holy Spirit. Grant that we may be as willing and always ready to receive your Word.

Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**

Bless all the places where your people meet for worship, but keep us from valuing them more highly than the knowledge that you are present everywhere and that you are with us here today as we worship from home.

Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**

By the Holy Spirit who came to Mary, bring peace and goodwill within and among all the nations.

We pray for a peaceful transition of presidential powers in the United States; for a fair and equitable outcome in the relationship between the United Kingdom and Europe; for continued co-operation and peaceful relations between Israel and the other middle eastern states; for an end to hostilities in Yemen and all other places in your world where conflict continues to blight and threaten people’s lives.

Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**

We pray for an end to the pandemic which has affected so many people across the world in these past months; for the safety of all engaged in health and social care working with those most vulnerable to the effects of the virus; for all those who have lost friends or relatives or who have been excluded from being with them at times when the love and support of family and friends is at its most important.

Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**



Have mercy, in these depths of winter, on the homeless, the refugee, and all those wandering lost in your world. Be especially close to women, like Mary, who have to bear their children in strange and unwelcoming places. Grant them all secure shelter and comfort and the knowledge of your presence with them in their struggles.

Father, by your Spirit  
**Bring in your Kingdom.**

We pray for all those who have died, especially those who have died alone and those who have died in pain, distress or discomfort. Give them rest in that place where, in your mercy, there is room, and there is no pain but safety and comfort for all.

Lord of the Church  
**Hear our prayer,  
And make us one in heart and mind  
To serve you with joy forever. Amen.**

## HYMN

Love came down at Christmas,  
Love all lovely, love divine;  
Love was born at Christmas,  
Star and angels gave the sign.

Worship we the Godhead,  
Love incarnate, love divine;  
Worship we our Jesus:  
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Love shall be our token,  
Love shall be yours and love be mine,  
Love to God and to all men,  
Love for plea and gift and sign.





## CONCLUSION

In the tender mercy of our God,  
The dayspring from on high shall break upon us,  
To give light to those who dwell in darkness  
And in the shadow of death  
And to guide our feet into the way of peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

*All* **Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who 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.**



## Hymn

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

### *Refrain*

Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest Heav'n adored;  
Christ the everlasting Lord;  
Late in time, behold Him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel.

Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,  
Scatter the darkness from before your path  
And make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory.

And the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
be among you and remain with you,  
and those whom you love,  
this day and always.

**Amen.**

*Material for this service was compiled by the Rev'd. Jeffrey Terry and is taken from Common Worship Services & Prayers for the Church of England; Common Worship: Times and Seasons & New Patterns of Worship, all Published by Church House Publishing © The Archbishops' Council 2002, 2006 & 2008 CCL#999402 with prayers adapted from Leading Intercessions, Chapman R, Canterbury Press, 1997.*