**Beacon Community Church – Sunday 10th January 2021**

Welcome everyone. Isn’t it good to be worshipping the Lord even if we are only able to do it by reading these notes? It will be wonderful the day when we can all meet again in church now the vaccine is available. We just need to be patient and trust in the Lord who is our hope and strength.

Some words of encouragement from Psalm 33 v20-22

We put our hope in the Lord.    He is our help and our shield. **21**In him our hearts rejoice,
    for we trust in his holy name.**22**Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord,    for **our hope is in you alone.**

Wonderful words “**our hope is in you alone**” words that we sing regularly in that wonderful song Faithful one so unchanging, who lifts us up when we fall down. All through the storm your love is the anchor my hope is in you alone Let’s sing those wonderful words together**. Faithful one so unchanging – MP 825**

Faithful One so unchanging.Ageless one you’re my rock of peace. Lord of all I depend on you I call out to you again and again. I call out to you again and again. You are my rock in times of trouble. You lift me up when I fall down. All through the storm your love is the anchor. My hope is in you alone

**Prayer & Lord’s Prayer.**

 Today is within the Wesleyan Reform Union a day of Prayer for our Country - Led By Rev Ian Fall – based on 2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people who are called by name, will humble themselves and pray, seek my face and turn from (Repent) of their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and I will forgive their sins and heal their land.

Three points to focus on in prayer

1. Humble ourselves – Seek God
2. Repent of any and all things that come between God and ourselves.
3. Pray for ourselves, loved ones, local, national and worldwide for healing

Bible Reading Matthew 2v 1-12

Let’s sing another song confirming that our hope is in the Lord

**In Christ Alone my hope is found - MP 1072**

In Christ alone my hope is found He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

My Comforter, my All in All Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - Who took on flesh, Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness, Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.
For every sin on Him was laid Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death this is the power of Christ in me;
From life’s first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home Here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.

**The Message**

We could only finish with that wonderful carol that reminds us that the hopes and fears we have are met as a result of that birth in Bethlehem

**Carol – O little Town of Bethlehem – MP 503**

1. O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see you lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by:
yet in your dark streets shining is everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in you tonight.
2. For Christ is born of Mary; and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the King, and peace to all the earth.

3. How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven:
no ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him - still the dear Christ enters in.
4. O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today!
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell -
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.

**Notices**

**There will be no Sunday services at church during lockdown until further notice.**

Prayer meeting on Monday via Zoom –Wednesday Fellowship time via Zoom

Next Sunday 17th January be led by Pastor Paul and will be on Zoom and Facebook.

Zoom Meeting ID: 805 199 3903 - Passcode: 182992 for all services.

Bi Weekly – Bible Studies starting Thursday 14th January – Kids time “Journey starting Wednesday 13th on the church Facebook site and shared on Whats app group.

**Benediction** –

May God’s blessing surround you each day as you trust Him and walk in His way
May His presence within guard and keep you from sin, Go in peace, go in joy, go in love –

**The message**

John Wilkes Booth a famous actor in the 19th century. The Tom Hanks or Brad Pitt of his day but became even more famous for the assassination of USA president Abraham Lincoln 1865. In a remote way this has a link with Christmas. News of the death of the president deeply troubled a young minister named Phillips Brooks. Whilst the president’s body lay in state Phillips Brooks went to pay his respects. It had a real effect on him and he was really down. Hoping to lift his spirits, the church sent him to the Holy Land for a holiday. The itinerary included a horseback ride from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. As it dropped dark the pastor was in the field where it was thought the shepherds heard the angelic announcement. The beauty and simplicity of that visit stayed with Phillips Brooks.He returned home and 3 years later he wrote some words. Music was added. The first verse gives us a picture of Bethlehem as he saw it in that wonderful carol

*O little town of Bethlehem how still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light****The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight***

The last line remind us that Bethlehem was more than a picturesque place in the Holy Land: **The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

As we look back on 2020 there have been many fears given the shaky state of the world. The headlines tell a grim story: Coronavirus and our 3rd lockdown, Brexit,

Against that backdrop we have the words of the angel to the terrified shepherds, **“I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people”** (Luke 2:10). We ask ourselves where is the good news that the angel promised? Well if we wind the clock back across the centuries, back to Bethlehem, but don’t stop there go all the way back to the time of Isaiah 700 hundred years earlier. He gave us the real answer to that question:

**“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given”** (Isaiah 9:6).

*God answers our anxiety with a manger in Bethlehem*. There we find the baby who brings us peace now and one day will bring peace to the whole world.

Isaiah 9:2 says, **“The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.”**

We live in dark days, and it is easy to be discouraged. **“The hopes and fears of all the years.”** We’ve got the fear part down just fine. But where is the hope?Listen to Isaiah’s answer:

***His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor*** *–* because he has the answers we need.
***Mighty God,*** - because he has the power to help us.
***Everlasting Father****,* - because he knows us and loves us anyway.
***Prince of Peace***, - because he alone can fix what is broken.

In mentioning Isaiah 9:6, I intentionally passed words at the end of the verse.**“The government shall be upon his shoulders.”** That means Jesus can bear the full weight of the world and all its problems. He is in control.

Before Covid 19 – The world had big problems. Poverty, Drug/Alcohol abuse. Racial Discrimination, Bullying, Obesity, Deprivation. Climate change, Global warning, War, Terrorists. This list has not gone away in some miraculous way. These problems are with us.

The government shall be upon his shoulders. This is our assurance that God is in control. It reminds us God is God and we’re not. He can arrange for a virgin to become pregnant. He can cause a Roman emperor to order a census at precisely the right moment in history. He can ensure the baby will be born at exactly the place prophesied 700 years earlier. He can put a star in the sky at the right moment. He can bring together angels, shepherds, and Wise Men to celebrate that miraculous birth. And he can take a tiny baby born in a stable and make that baby the Saviour of the world. God can do all that because he is in control of everything.

January 6th we celebrate Epiphany, let’s look at the story of wise men in Matthew 2. They represent the pagan people of the world who come from distant lands to bring their tribute to the infant King. While his own people reject him, the Gentiles bow before him with costly gifts.

**Gifts Fit for a King**

When they finally found Jesus, the Magi presented him with gifts fit for a king

—Gold pointing to his majesty … for he is king.

—Frankincense pointing to his deity … for he is God.

—Myrrh pointing to his humanity … for he is destined to die.

The wise men wouldn’t have understood the reason behind the gifts. But God arranged it so that their gifts would point us to who he is and why he came.

**The Baby Who Will Rule the World**

When the Magi finally found the baby Jesus, were they disappointed? They might have been given all they had been through, the long journey, and the detour in Jerusalem did what they find seem an anticlimax? It might have seemed that way.

* He did not look like a king. - His home did not look like a castle.
* He commanded no armies - He gave no speeches, passed no laws
* He could not walk or talk - No royal decree came from his lips.
* There was nothing to make you think he was a king.
* To the outward eye, he was nothing but a peasant child born in dire poverty.

But to the Magi, he was a king. He possessed more royalty in a cradle than Herod possessed in his fine palace. He was greater in his infancy than any king ever in their ascendancy. He was more powerful as a child than any world leader ever. But it did not seem that way. To the eyes of the world this birth revealed nothing but a normal baby, making baby noises, moving his tiny hands. Somehow the Magi saw beyond the present and into the future and in deep faith, they worshipped him. They saw that this child would one day rule the world and they were not ashamed to fall on their faces before him. We read that the Magi met Herod, we do not read that they worshipped him. But when they found this tiny baby, rocking in his mother’s arms, these great men fell on their faces before him. This baby got the honour due a king. He received what Herod desired,

**The Star of Bethlehem**

Then there is the star. Something about that heavenly light seems so appropriate. The Wise Men were students of the sky. You might say that if God wanted to get a message to them he picked the perfect way. This star appeared in the east to alert the Magi to begin their journey. It led them via a detour to the very home where Mary and Joseph were taking care of the baby. Their focus was a single star but so different. A star that would lead them to the Light of the World. The wise men faced a decision. Were they going to pursue the star? At what cost and for how long? Were they going to move out of their comfort zone in order to search for something small yet priceless?

We are faced with the same decision Will we pursue Jesus? Will we recognize the amazing signs God places around us that point to the reality of the saviour of the world, Jesus Christ? Will we journey to get to know Him? Let us join them their journey to Bethlehem. A baby lies there who is the Light of the World. The King in the cradle.

What a strange world we live in. How different things seem now compared to a year ago, how uncertain we all feel. But some things do not change and will never change. Wise men still seek him. And those who seek him find him. That will never change.

Phillips Brooks was right:

*The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight****.***

As we move into 2021, there is still much to fear but in Jesus the light of the world there is hope. *God’s answer can be found in Bethlehem*. The baby in the manger means God is fixing this broke world. A light shines from the manger to tell us that darkness will not win in the end. Jesus carries the full weight of all your problems,

for **“the government will be on his shoulders.” Isaiah 9 v 6**

*Our Lord is in charge.* He reigns from heaven amid the chaos we see around us. That’s why the angel said, “Fear not!” We need not be afraid. That baby in the manger is God’s answer, not just for us personally, but for the whole world.

AMEN