



Another Year is Dawning...
Another year with Thee, Lord!



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Welcome to 2021!

A Happy and Blessed
year ahead to each of you!

03 January 2021

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Good morning and a warm welcome on the first Sunday in 2021. As more people find themselves “in lockdown”, welcome to this time and space where there is FREEDOM! We are free to sing, free to pray and free to hear God’s Word, which brings joy to our great, awesome and living God!

We don’t know for how long, but it appears for some time yet, we shall continue to meet in this way, knowing that we miss our fellowship with each other, but our encounter with God is real!

Lets’ Worship God in Prayer

Eternal God, Lord and Master of yesterday, today and tomorrow. On this first Sunday of the New Year our emotions are a mixture of hope, anticipation, fear, excitement, and expectation, but also a day to renew our faith in You.

As we look forward, we do not know what the year holds for any of us. Concerns and fears cloud our view of the future, and worries about health, family, job security and finances consume us. Some are looking forward to weddings, special birthdays and anniversaries, holidays to enjoy, friends to meet and laugh with, and many desirous of deepening their relationship with You.

Lord God, the coming year may be full of uncertainty, but whatever the year may hold for us, we place our faith in You; and we place every moment of every day of this year in your care knowing that, as in the past, You will always be with us, caring for us with Your constant love.

And so Lord, let this time of worship be pleasing to you and a blessing to us, filling us with joy and anticipation of, *“Your Kingdom Come on earth, exactly as it is in Heaven!”* **AMEN.**

Let’s continue our worship, expressing gratitude to God for His faithfulness to us during the year past, singing with gusto in your own home, with your family!

HYMN Great is Your Faithfulness, O God! My Father !

In Memoriam, [Ring out, wild bells]

by Alfred Lord Tennyson - 1809-1892

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

This poem is in the public domain.

Let the following hymn be your response to Tennyson's call to "Ring out the old and Ring in the new"

HYMN God's Spirit is in my heart

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 103:1-5

Bless the Lord, O my soul;
All that is within me, Bless His Holy Name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits
Who pardons all your wrong-doing and wrong-thinking;
Who heals all your diseases;
Who redeems your life from the eternal pit;
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;
Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

Let's worship God with adoration, the centre of unbroken praise, the wellspring of the joy of living. So join the mighty chorus, the morning stars began;

HYMN Joyful! Joyful! We Adore Thee

MESSAGE

Our Christmas readings in the book of Isaiah refer to a Light:

There will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. 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. (9:1-2) ... For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called, 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (9:6-7)

In Genesis 1, God who is Light-Revealing-Truth, creates this world. Brokenness through doubt and disobedience brought darkness, but God promises, *people who walk in darkness will see a great light ... those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine.* Light which creates **NEW** life! Life not terminated by death, but life which co-exists with God in eternity, beyond the bounds of time.

The pandemic brought on by the corona virus has wreaked havoc across all peoples of the earth. *'God with us'! You must be joking! Where was He when I lost my job this year? Where was He when I was home alone for nine months? Where was He when my father/mother/brother/sister died without any of us at his bedside? "Immanuel – God with us"? Take that Christmas card and put it straight in the bin.'*

Such thoughts and conversations represent our struggle, the reality of life as we live it on the one hand, and God's promise of life through His Son, Jesus our Christ on the other. Such struggles are a normal part of life.

What did Mary feel when the Angel said to her, *"The Son you will conceive and give birth to, and will name Jesus, will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"* How can this possible when she had not yet moved in with Joseph!

How did Joseph feel when he discovered Mary was pregnant before they were living together, and God's Angel said, *"don't hesitate to get married to Mary. Her*

pregnancy is Spirit-conceived. God's Holy Spirit has made her pregnant. She will bring a son to birth, and when she does, you, Joseph, will name him Jesus—'God saves'—because He will save His people from their sins."

Then, when they had to flee to Egypt in the darkness of night, sure the thought crossed their minds, *'Where is God? Why is all this happening? The birth of a son, that to the promised Saviour of Israel, is to be a glorious time in our lives!'*

Matthew offers us a very practical, pastoral message about the presence of God in the darkest of times. He wants us to know, God has come to us in person to bring light into our darkness, and invites us to follow Him in obedience.

It is natural to have doubts, but the longer we linger in darkness, our doubts feed on anything but the Truth, because the darkness hides Truth from us.

But Truth has a way of emerging into Light for all to see. Truth can never be hidden and those who try to hide it, find themselves overcome by Truth. Hear the confessions and revelations of some for whom Truth set them free:

"I discovered that God was with me in the dingy darkness of a Clacton nightclub when I was way down the wrong path, and He lit up my mind with a question: 'Where is your life going?' "

"I found that God was with me in the lonely darkness of my bedroom as I wrestled again with how to make myself sick, and His presence shone a light of hope that life could be different."

"I met Jesus in my locked prison cell, serving time for my 98th conviction, and suddenly a new purpose began to shine in my life."

Jesus met thousands of people disappointed and discouraged by the human experience of life, those experiencing poverty, loss, temptation, betrayal and death. Yet, those whom others would avoid, He touched; those whom others turned away, he drew close; those whom others rejected, he ate with them.

The Bible, the only authoritative Word of God teaches us, *"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house*

on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house; yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock.” (Matthew 7:24–27).

Jesus’ disciple John said, “Anyone who claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. But anyone who hates a fellow believer, is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness. (1 John 2:9-11)

John also revealed, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it (What we believe about God which is not true, will be revealed; only Truth will survive and be known to all who seek it) John 1:5

The new year brings us face-to-face with the question:

Upon what will you build your life in 2021?

Will it be on the light that pierces the darkness, that the darkness cannot extinguish?

Jesus has given us the means (***Himself***), the method (***the Gospel***) and the strength (***The Holy Spirit***), to build our lives. Will we use these freely given?

Darkness may have dominated last year, but Christmas reminds us the greater truth: that Emmanuel has come into our darkness, illuminating our view of the world through the lens of Truth; then we can truly know and say, ‘*God is with us*’.

“I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations” (42:6 later quoted in Acts 13:47)

I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” (49:6)

Grasp this promise of God and let Him make you the fulfilment of His promise.

AMEN

Quietly the New Year slipped in!

I opened eyes to a new day
but the sunrise was,
as it always has been
on this day, at this time!
Why then am I more fearful?
Have I, on this day, become more aware
of the suffering, violence, inequality, and injustice in our world
that I should be interested in wanting it to stop this year?

Holy God!
At the start of this New Year,
I want a new relationship with You.
I don't want to play hide-and-seek with You.
I want to seek You and find You easily,
to satisfy my real hunger for the meaning of life,
to see You dispense absolute justice,
to watch you broker perfect peace,
and marvel how You bathe the most undeserving with Your pure love,
myself included!

Open my heart to love You in ways I never imagined possible!
Open my mind to know more of You.
Open my hands to serve those who have never been served.
Open my ears and eyes to hear and see all You see and hear:
my neighbour's plea, the loneliness of foreigner and the refugee,
even my enemy's cry for YOUR love,
for no other reason than to discover for myself,
I cannot be part of Your plan for men, women and children
unless ...

You transform me into the likeness of Christ
in whose Name I make this request.

AMEN.

03 January 2021

HYMN Lord for the years, your love has kept and guided

BENEDICTION

We Believe

(based on Isaiah 61:10-11)

We believe!

We believe joyfully in our God of love and celebrate our God.

As soil after drought produces green shoots

and as garden seeds spring into new life,

so our God produces justice and praise to spring up among
His people, in His Church and across all nations.

We believe joyfully in our Christ

who dresses us in the garment of salvation,

covers us with the robe of righteousness,

and presents us to His Father, now seated at His right hand.

We are adopted into God's family as Holy.

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit to live life, I dedicate my life to
Him as a living sacrifice until the day when He calls my Name
and seats me at His table for the eternal banquet!

AMEN.

HYMN Another year is dawning, ... Another Year with Thee!