

Worship 13th December 2020 – Advent 3

Aberlour Parish Church

Rev Andrew Kimmitt

Intimations:

Buildings open

The buildings are open for in-person services of worship again– in Craigellachie at 9.45am and Aberlour at 11.15am.

If you wish to come in person, **you must ‘book’ a place**. This ensures that we keep to a safe capacity for each building as well as giving us ‘track and trace’ details in the event that any potential Covid-19 transmission might be detected.

To book: email aberlourchurchbooking@gmail.com

Or call Jane Tweedie 01340 871515

Heather Cruikshank 01340 871898

Rev Andrew Kimmitt 07752306462

Bittersweet Christmas Service – 23rd December, 7pm at Aberlour Church

Christmas is a difficult time for many of us. Even among choruses of ‘Joy to the World’ there are many reasons why some of us will have reasons to pause in sadness, memory, or simply find ‘enjoying’ Christmas impossible. And yet the Gospel of John tells us ‘the Light shines in the darkness’ – in this quiet and reflective service there will be space for memory and reflection for those who will struggle with Christmas this year.

If you intend to come, the same process of ‘booking’ above applies.

Christingle

We are holding a digital All-age Christingle service this year on **Christmas Eve, 3pm** over ‘Zoom’.

We can sing carols, share in the story of Jesus coming, and make Christingles together with our special ‘just add an orange’ Christingle kits. For more information see:

www.aberlour.video/christingle

Introduction

Hello and welcome to worship this Sunday, the 13th December

This week is the 3rd week of advent, and as we light the third advent candle representing *love* we heard words from the prophet Isaiah which would later be read by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth:

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted”

This is the love of God for us: good news and being bound up in God’s healing arms. Let us worship God.

NB – for the in-person services and on the videos, worshippers are encouraged to join in with the leader for the words in UPPER CASE

Advent Litany

Among the poor,
among the proud,
among the persecuted,
among the privileged,
Christ is coming,
HE IS COMING TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.

In the private house,
in the market place,
in the wedding feast,
in the judgement hall,
Christ is coming,
HE IS COMING TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.

With a gentle touch,
with an angry word,
with a clear conscience,
with burning love,
Christ is coming,
HE IS COMING TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.

That the kingdom might come,
that the world might believe,
that the powerful might stumble,
that the humble might be raised,
Christ is coming,
HE IS COMING TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.

Within us,
without us,
among us,
before us,
in this place,
in every place,
for this time,
for all time,
Christ is coming,
HE IS COMING TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.

Godly Play story – advent 3

In our in-person and recorded services, Andrew is telling the ‘Godly Play’ stories for each week of advent. To see a recording, go to www.aberlour.video/services

Lighting the advent candle

[CH4 284, v1,2,3]

*Hope is candle, once lit by the prophets,
never consumed though it burns through the years.
Dim in the daylight of power and privilege,
when they are gone Hope will shine on.*

*Peace is a candle to show us the pathway,
threatened by gusts from our rage and our greed.
Friend, feel no envy for those in the shadows -
violence and force their dead-end course.*

*Love is a candle who light makes a circle,
where every face is the face of a friend.
Widen the circle by sharing and giving –
God’s holy dare: love everywhere.*

Richard Leach
CCLI Licence No. 649173

Reading

Isaiah 61:1-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.
⁵ Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,
foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;
⁶ but you shall be called priests of the LORD,
you shall be named ministers of our God;
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,
and in their riches you shall glory.
⁷ Because their shame was double,
and dishonour was proclaimed as their lot,
therefore they shall possess a double portion;
everlasting joy shall be theirs.
⁸ For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Reflection

Too often today we think of Love as something we do and experience in private, characterising a relationship between two people. In romantic relationships, in family relationships, with our nearest friends. Love, that close bond of affection which poets throughout the centuries have written about – yes, different in its dimensions and directions. The Greeks famously had separate words for it: *Eros* – the love of romance, desire, and sexual passion; *Philos* – the love of friendship and affection; *Storge* – the love shared in the family, between children and parents, and siblings. In each of these cases love is between one of us and another, or a few. It is something we share with that person, in a way that is unique and private to that relationship.

In our reading, Isaiah paints a word-picture of what love looks like. And while Isaiah picks up on themes from that private sphere of love (like the lines of a bridegroom and bride in v10) we are dealing here with a very public love: the love of God for us, God's people. Returning to the Greek language, this is what would be called *Agape* – divine love, received through God, and reflective of God. This is the love of the commandment: Love God, and love your neighbour. This is the love of goodwill, and peace, and hope, and faith. This is the love Paul talks about in that well known reading in 1 Corinthians 13, that starts 'Love is patient, Love is kind...' And you won't get a much better picture of this love than Paul's writing there.

It is interesting that today we think of love as confined to one-to-one relationships. Even when we think of love of God, we have a tendency to frame it in terms of a one-to-one relationship: God to me, and me to God. But Isaiah's word form a promise of God to *all* who are oppressed, to comfort *all* who mourn. This is a public declaration of God's love not just for individuals but for all of God's people, especially those for whom life is a struggle and strain. It is no surprise that when Jesus read these words, in the synagogue of his own town, and declared that 'Today this word has been fulfilled' it was in the context of public worship. We know Jesus had many and important private conversations sharing God's love; but *this* revelation of God's love, *this* is the public face of God's love for the world.

And this is what it looks like, in Isaiah's and Jesus' words: those who are oppressed given comfort; those who are imprisoned given freedom; those who mourn finding reason for joy; lamented ruins rebuilt stronger; strangers welcomed and made at home; wealth shared amongst all; those who've seen what is theirs plundered repaid double for those loss; parched land springing green shoots again.

It is a vision that I suspect we have no hesitation getting behind. It is a vision of a better world. It is a vision of divine love lived out in the public sphere.

There are many qualities we might ask for in a political leader. I don't know how often we ask our leaders to show love.

Two thousand years ago, the Jewish people awaited a Messiah who would be a king to inaugurate a new rule. To stir up the people, drum up an army, and win political and military might for God's

people. That's not what we got in the Messiah who was born at Bethlehem. What we got was love made flesh; and a king who reigns over a realm where love, and love made public, and love which realises the fullness of Isaiah's vision, is the currency of all human relating.

Dare we, this advent, look again for the promiser of *that* love?

Dare we take up our part in living out *that* love?

Dare we, in all the darkness, allow ourselves the hope which concludes that *that* love will win, is winning, has already won?

Prayer

Love came down at Christmas,
love all lovely, Love Divine.

God of love,
As we prepare this advent to celebrate your coming as Love made flesh,
open our hearts to be vessels of your love for the world.

And so as we open our hearts, hear the concerns and burdens they carry.
And in the silence, hear us as we pray for those borne in our hearts this day.

[silence]

God of joy and exultation,
you strengthen what is weak;
you enrich the poor
and give hope to those who live in fear.
Look upon our needs this day.
Make us grateful for the good news of salvation
and keep us faithful in your service
until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives for ever and ever. Amen.

Advent Blessing

God of the watching ones,
the waiting ones,
the slow and suffering ones,
the angels in heaven,
the child in the womb,

GIVE US YOUR BENEDICTION,
YOUR GOOD WORD FOR OUR SOULS,
THAT WE MIGHT REST AND RISE
IN THE KINDNESS OF YOUR COMPANY.

AMEN.