

**Largs Church of the Nazarene
20 December 2020**



Isaiah 9 (NIV)

Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan –

2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

5 Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and for ever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

O come, all ye faithful

(Attributed to) John Francis Wade

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.

Refrain: O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above:
"Glory to God,
All glory in the highest!" [Refrain]

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
Jesus, to Thee be all glory giv'n;
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing. [Refrain]

Fourth Sunday of Advent Candle Lighting

Reader 1: Today is the last Sunday of Advent. We stand on the threshold of Christmas. The time of waiting in the darkness that we have been remembering and enacting is about to come to a close. The long night is almost over. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

Reader 2: As Advent comes to an end, we're also nearing the end of 2020, a year many are eager to put behind them. We hope that next year will be better. We hope that next year will bring freedom from the restrictions and anxieties that have darkened our lives these past months. We look forward to a brighter day. We look forward to joy. We look forward to peace.

Reader 1: In the book of Isaiah we read: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. . . For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Reader 2: As we light these candles today we look forward to the coming of the Prince of Peace, the Light of the World who brings peace to his people—a peace that passes all understanding—a peace that is everlasting. We're almost there. Christmas is coming.

Both readers: O come, O come, Emmanuel.

The people: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Angels, from the realms of glory

James Montgomery

Angels from the realms of glory,
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;
Ye who sang creation's story
Now proclaim Messiah's birth

Refrain: Come and worship, come and worship,
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the field abiding,
Watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing;
Yonder shines the infant light [Refrain]

Sages, leave your contemplations,
Brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great Desire of nations;
Ye have seen His natal star [Refrain]

Saints before the altar bending
Watching long in hope and fear
Suddenly the Lord descending
In His temple shall appear [Refrain]

John 1 (NIV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Can You Hear It? (John 1; Isaiah 9)

- **Astronomical news**
 - NASA, NOIRLab and New Horizons
 - How dark is it? Not as dark as we thought it was
 - Psalm 19: their voice goes out into all the earth
 - Can you hear it?
 - “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it!”
- **John 1**
 - A Christmas story
 - “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.” (MSG)
 - The Light moved into the neighbourhood
- **Isaiah 9**
 - There will be no more gloom for those who were in distress
 - Isaiah begins with the darkness
 - Peace comes by way of a neonate, to whom all authority is given
 - Inverted logic?
 - *Pax Romana*
 - *Shalom*
- **I heard the bells on Christmas Day**
 - From the promise of daybreak to the gloom of despair
 - But the poet keeps listening
 - The darkness is not as dark as we think it is
 - The message of Christmas can be heard in many places
 - Can you hear it?

Their voice goes out into all the earth—can you hear it? It resounds throughout the universe, tolling from the foundations of creation, ringing out to all with ears to listen, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it!”

