

## Worship at home, 15th December 2024

(The Vine at home, a Free resource for 15th December 2024, funded by donations from Individuals, churches and twelvebaskets. For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-> resource)

### Isaiah 12.2-6 (NIV)

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

In that day you will say:

"Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

### Prayer

In the darkness, shine your light, O God. In the cold, bring your warmth, O Christ. In the chaos, breath your peace, O Spirit. Come, O come Immanuel.

In this time of worship, bring your healing to me, O God.

In the rest of this day, bring your peace to those around me, O Christ. In the week ahead, bring your hope to the whole world, O Spirit. Come, O come, Immanuel.

*You might like to light a candle, and hold a few minutes stillness or silence, praying for stillness in your own heart, and peace in the world. Amen.*

### Hymn

O come O Come Immanuel

<https://youtu.be/UH7asSGxAxA?feature=shared>

Readings: Luke 3:7-18

**Reflection:** John the Baptist is angry!

In this week's gospel reading, we get one of the best / most vicious 'put downs' in the whole Bible! John the Baptist, surrounded by crowds of listeners, calls them a 'brood of vipers.'

This is not a recommended technique for Preachers and Worship Leaders training...

This passage, along with that famous moment when Jesus turns the tables over in the temple, often raise an important and difficult debate for us as Christians today: is it okay to be angry?

Do you have a view on this? Are you someone who gets angry quickly, or someone it is difficult to provoke? Do you think this affects your discipleship?

There is a strong tradition of 'righteous anger' in the Christian people, and much of it has motivated people to bring about the kind of social change that Jesus seems to have been preaching and teaching about. As one wise teacher has put it: 'be careful of what makes you angry, it might just be God's way of prompting you to do something about it.' Yet, that still raises important questions about where the line is, and what we do with our anger.

There is also, of course, a strong tradition of non-violence within the Christian tradition and many of us might agree that any anger that leads to violence is misplaced. But anger that motivates non-violent protest, or fuels the energy to bring about social change in healthy, peaceful ways might well be a positive force in the world. What's your take? This is something you could discuss with trusted friends and Christian leaders in your life. What's their take?

John is angry because there are clearly people around him who are pretending to be religious without backing this up with a way of life that showed true repentance and transformation. The way ahead was not then - and is not now - pious religiosity but a costly choice, which was about to be embodied in Jesus. This choice involved setting different priorities and living in a new way. In other words, not simply trying to be good or follow the rules but taking the risk of being baptized, of encountering the Holy Spirit, of totally

transforming the way you live.

Can we make that sort of radical change today? What does that look like for you this week? How often do you hear the word 'religion' in negative ways? What can you do to change the 'religiosity' in your life / church community into a force for good in the world and community around you?

Lots to reflect on this week. Make some time to pray about your responses to these questions, you might like to write them down or sketch, paint, craft a response. Or to speak to someone else who is using these resources to swap ideas and initial thoughts...

### Hymn

The kingdom of God is justice and joy - <https://youtu.be/7-PaZbwyy4g?feature=shared>

### Prayers

- Give thanks for something good in your life.
- Christmas is a very loud season, with so much music, so many voices, so many adverts! How can you 'Hush the noise' this year, in preparation for the advent of God's coming? How can you be present to the incarnation and listen to the still, small voice? Find a moment today when you can turn off all the background noise, and just hold a moment of silence.
- Pray for all who will be working over the Christmas period - all those key workers who keep our society going.
- Pray for those who are travelling this week to be with loved ones this Christmas.
- Pray for those who will be on their own this Christmas.
- Pray for those who are separated from their loved ones because of circumstances beyond their control.
- God, the source of all health: So, fill my heart with faith in your love, that with calm expectancy I may make room for your grace to heal me, and gracefully accept your healing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- God of all grace, God of the Christmas season, Show me how to share the hope of the Christmas story with those around me this year, in conversation, in the giving and receiving of gifts, in the way I live my life. Help me to be a guardian and an evangelist for your good news this year. Amen.
- **Prayer in Pain:** Lord Jesus Christ, by your patience in suffering, you blessed earthly pain and gave us the example of obedience to your Father's will: Be near me in my time of weakness and pain; sustain me by your grace, that my strength and courage may not fail; heal me according to your will; and help me always to believe that what happens to me here is of little account if you hold me in eternal life, my Lord and my God. Amen
- **Prayer for Healing:** Heavenly Father, I come before you with a heart burdened by illness. You are the great healer, and I place my trust in your loving hands. Grant me strength to endure this trial and courage to face each day. Pour out your healing grace upon my body, mind, and spirit. May your peace, which surpasses all understanding, fill my heart. In the midst of my weakness, be my strength. I surrender myself to your care, trusting that your love will sustain me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

### **Blessing**

May you go with peace, into this time of busy-ness and consumerism. May you be a person of sanctuary and calm, channelling righteous anger where needed, but never driven to violence, offering a different way to do Christmas, To experience it as a time of love divine, all loves excelling. Amen.