Wednesday Morning Worship, 6th January 2020

Epiphany

**Readings**

**Psalm 113**

1 Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, you his servants;

    praise the name of the Lord.

2 Let the name of the Lord be praised,

    both now and forevermore.

3 From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,

    the name of the Lord is to be praised.

4 The Lord is exalted over all the nations,

    his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like the Lord our God,

    the One who sits enthroned on high,

6 who stoops down to look

    on the heavens and the earth?

7 He raises the poor from the dust

    and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

8 he seats them with princes,

    with the princes of his people.

9 He settles the childless woman in her home

    as a happy mother of children.

Praise the Lord.

**Jeremiah 31:7-14**

**7**This is what the Lord says:

‘Sing with joy for Jacob;

    shout for the foremost of the nations.

Make your praises heard, and say,

    “Lord, save your people,

    the remnant of Israel.”

8 See, I will bring them from the land of the north

    and gather them from the ends of the earth.

Among them will be the blind and the lame,

    expectant mothers and women in labour;

    a great throng will return.

9 They will come with weeping;

    they will pray as I bring them back.

I will lead them beside streams of water

    on a level path where they will not stumble,

because I am Israel’s father,

    and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

10 ‘Hear the word of the Lord, you nations;

    proclaim it in distant coastlands:

“He who scattered Israel will gather them

    and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.”

11 For the Lord will deliver Jacob

    and redeem them from the hand of those stronger than they.

12 They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion;

    they will rejoice in the bounty of the Lord –

the grain, the new wine and the olive oil,

    the young of the flocks and herds.

They will be like a well-watered garden,

    and they will sorrow no more.

13 Then young women will dance and be glad,

    young men and old as well.

I will turn their mourning into gladness;

    I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

14 I will satisfy the priests with abundance,

    and my people will be filled with my bounty,’

declares the Lord.

**Reflections on the readings:**

The book of Jeremiah is full of doom and gloom, he is called the weeping prophet. It doesn’t sound like a particularly fun book to read. The news is not great. The people of God are refusing to turn away from their unfaithfulness and are in a mess. Yet, despite their sin and current situation Jeremiah brings them a promise of redemption and restoration. Chapter 31 is full of hope and a future for the people of God. God has not forgotten about them, and is gathering his people back home. ’I will lead them beside streams of water, on a level path where they will not stumble…because I am Israel’s father (v9). They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more (v12).

God is telling his people that he is their father and stronger than their enemies. He promises them that he will send a shepherd to watch over them. They will not be lacking and whatever they are going through, which at this time was challenging and uncomfortable, he reminds then it will not last.

Jeremiah 31 offers glimpses of a bright future for a people who were obviously facing great challenge. They are obviously facing challenge times, sorrow is what they know and oppression is norm. There wasn’t much left of Israel, the enemies had taken its people and ruined their land. But God is calling them back together, he is gathering his people form all over and is promising them salvation.

What stands out to you in this reading from Jeremiah?

What promises can we hold on to from these verses?

Our Psalm this morning is all about praising and the one to whom the praise is due, the Lord God. Psalm 113 is calling God’s people to praise him continually. Our unchanging God never becomes unworthy of our praise. The more we come to know him, only reveals more reasons to praise him. And despite the challenging and desperate situation the people in Jeremiah’s day are in, they are called to praise their God and make these praises heard. It may not have been what was expected, loud songs of praises in this situation but this is what God is calling his people to do. It reminds me of the praises given to God by Paul and Silas, who choose, despite being in jail, to sing praises to God (Acts 16:22-26). Why not make a list of all the reasons why we praise him.

What situations are we facing with this day?

What is our favourite hymn/song or Bible verse? Why not spend some time, whether in song or just saying the words, praising God with our favourite hymns and/or Bible verses.

Today is Epiphany and is a feast and season that celebrates divine revelation. The focal event of Epiphany is the coming of God's revelation in Christ to the Gentiles, in particular to the wise men. The season of epiphany focuses on the truth that God reveals in Jesus Christ, and the truthful living as a response to our encounter with this revelation.

Epiphany is when some churches celebrate and remember the visit of the wise men and the Baptism of Jesus. Epiphany means ‘revelation’ and both the visit from these wise men and Jesus Baptism are significant times because this is when Jesus was ‘revealed’ to be the messiah. The wise men came from the east and they praised the Messiah, they gave great gifts and worshiped the Christ-child.

So, why not this season of Epiphany, despite our current situation and challenges, choose to praise our God. We are not called to only praise God when things are going well and smoothly but to praise him continually. Which means in the tough times, in the times when we don’t know where he is or why certain things are happening, times when we feel we can’t praise him because its too painful, praise him. There is something freeing and healing when we do, which shifts our eyes and perspective back to God.

**Prayers**

Thank you Lord that you are faithful and when we read the bible we see so much evidence of this. Help us to see this in our lives and the lives of those around us. Help us in these challenging times to see your faithfulness, that you haven’t changed and you are still the same God of the Bible.

Lord of Glory

**Hear our prayer.**

We lift up to you all teachers, children/students, all those involved in education and the families this morning. We ask for your strength and guidance in ever changing times. Bless those family homes, may they be filled with your peace God.

Lord of Glory

**Hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father we lift up those who we know to you this morning who are vulnerable, isolated and lonely. We ask for your hand of protection to be upon them this morning, comfort them and fill them with your Holy Spirit. May they know your faithfulness this morning. Were also think of those who are struggling with mental or physical health, bless them and encourage them in these times.

Lord of Glory

**Hear our prayer.**

We lift up the parish of Bourne End and all those who live in the parish. We pray that as we enter into a new year fill all with your hope and peace and may they be guided by you like the wise men were. May the star that has been in the window this Christmas season be a light to those in this parish and those passing through.

Lord of Glory

**Hear our prayer.**

We lift up to you our God who is not a distanced God but a close God the devastation of the Earthquake in Croatia. We pray for the towns that have been affected and those people who have lost family and loved ones. May they know your comfort and strength in this time.

Lord of Glory

**Hear our prayer.**

As we come into a new year, may we, as the wise men did, praise you Jesus. Give us the spirit of adoration, may we worship and praise you continually this year, in all circumstances. We offer you our gifts at the beginning of this year, accept the offering of our hearts and minds. May we know your hand of guidance this year on our lives and may we choose to follow you.

Lord of Glory

**Hear our prayer.**

**Collect for today**

**Creator of the heavens,**

**who led the Magi by a star**

**to worship the Christ-child:**

**guide and sustain us,**

**that we may find our journey**’**s end**

**in Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Amen.**