

LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCO20871 and SCO10035

20th December Advent 4 LOVE

Call to worship

Advent God, we ask you once again on this the fourth Sunday in Advent come amongst us. God of love, come into our hearts now as we come to worship. Fill our hearts with your love, with your joy and with your peace. May we like the candles that we shall light shine out in the darkness bringing your love.

Amen.

Lighting our Advent Candles

Let your light shine. Let your spirit soar. Throw open your mind. Hand over your heart. Here it comes – love.

It shines in the darkness. It sings in the shadows. It will not cower and cannot be contained. It was the hope of the saints, the call of the prophets. It was the fire in the belly of John the Baptist and the courage of Mother Mary.

Lamp in the window, beacon on the hill, star in the night sky. Love, you lead us home.

Light Candles 1,2,3 & 4

**On the fourth Sunday of Advent, we light a candle for love.
May it light the way. AMEN**

HYMN Hark the glad sound, the Saviour comes

1 Hark the glad sound!, the Saviour comes
the Saviour promised long;
let every heart exult with joy,
and every voice with song.

the bleeding souls to cure;
and with the treasures of his grace
to bless the humble poor

2 He comes, the prisoners to relieve,
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield

4 Our glad hosanna, Prince of peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim;
And heaven's eternal arches ring
With thy most honoured name.

3 He comes the broken hearts to bind,

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Prayers

Most High God, who left your throne to come down to us, to be one of us...

You look us in the eye and understand us.

You have compassion on us and you heal us, and you love us.

You know our failings... but your forgiving love will not let us go.

Come once again to us...give us the heart of a humble servant.

Lift up the lowly, scatter the proud empires of this world, and bring down the arrogant structures of power.

O Holy God of Promise, we so often place our trust in the things we can see, and touch, and easily believe.

But you did not ask us to believe what is easy, you have asked us to believe what is true!

Forgive us, Holy One, when we doubt the ways you work.

Forgive us when we find it hard to believe an ancient story.

Forgive us when we question how you chose to enter the world, born as one of us.

Forgive our lack of faith and belief in ways which seem so impossible to believe.

Help us to look in faith, open our belief, and set aside our doubts that you sent your Son, born of a virgin – the one who has come to set us all free.

We offer these prayers in the name of your Son,

Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

Reading Isaiah 11 : 1 – 10 The Branch From Jesse

11 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—
3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling^[a] together;
and a little child will lead them.
7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
8 The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.
9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.
10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to
him, and his resting place will be glorious.

Reflection

When he (King Herod) had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. Matthew 2 : 4

Today on this last Sunday in Advent we will look at the names Christ – the Greek translation of the Hebrew term Messiah which means 'the Anointed One'. In Old Testament times, anointing signified being set aside for service, particularly as a king or a priest. Jesus came not as **an** anointed one but as **The Anointed One**, both King and Priest, set apart not by any man but by God Himself.

When John the Baptist appeared on the scene, his contemporaries were attracted to his fierce preaching and rugged appearance. Many were convinced he was the Messiah, but he repeatedly told them that he was only the forerunner, and called the people to repent in preparation for the Messiah's arrival. The scene was set, and many waited with bated breath to meet the One who would deliver them from all their enemies.

Except Jesus wasn't what they expected. The Jews wanted a military leader who would liberate them from the Roman oppression. But Jesus was meek and quiet in spirit. They wanted an established leader, one the rulers of the world would listen to and respect. But Jesus was born in questionable circumstance and possessed no earthly valuables. They wanted a poster child for Jewish superiority. But Jesus hung out with outcasts and upended cultural norms. In short, many Jews were disappointed in Jesus, but the Christ did not come to win a popularity contest.

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Jesus is the One on whom all history hinges. All kings and priests before Jesus pointed to Him, prophets spoke of Him, the Magi brought gifts for Him, John the Baptist prepared the people for Him, and the Father anointed Him. And as we move forward, we still look back. We count our years from the date of His coming – our calendar dating system today is based on the number of years since Jesus approximate birth. We have special days marked on our calendars that mark his birth, his death and his resurrection.

Jesus was God's answer to Israel's prayers. He was the Messiah, but they rejected Him. "he came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1 : 11 – 12). So gratefully we celebrate Him as the Christ, the Anointed One not just for Israel but for all humankind who believe in Him.

And here is a small challenge for you for over this Christmas Season. Have you tried to fit Jesus into your idea of who He should be or how He should act? Take time over Christmas to read through the gospels. Reacquaint yourself with Jesus. Marvel at his miracles. Chuckle at His witty responses to the Pharisees' snide remarks. Weep as His people reject Him and He walks to Golgotha. Rejoice as the stone is rolled away and the tomb is found empty. Go beyond surface familiarity with the stories and engage with The Anointed One as He is revealed in the pages of Scripture.

Prayer

Lord, what a privilege to be included in Your Family. Forgive us for assuming that we know You and for trying to fit You in a box. Though we can never fathom Your all in all, help us to continue learning about your character. We rejoice in the hope that you have brought to all of us who otherwise have been lost. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Into our troubles and weaknesses,
Into the barren places of our souls, Come Lord,
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

Into the war torn parts of our world and to the refugee,
Into those who live in conflict, Come Lord,
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

Into the homeless and the unemployed,
Into those who feel abandoned, Come Lord,
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

Into the sick and the disabled,
Into those with Covid, and with cancer, those with dementia and depression Come, Lord
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

Into the poor and the starving,
Into those who are oppressed or abused, Come Lord
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

Into the lives of loved ones,
Into those from whom we are estranged, Come Lord,
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

Into our joys and celebrations,
Into our work and our achievements, Come, Lord
Come down, come in, come among us and make us whole.

O Christ we long for your coming. Hasten that day when those who seek you in every nation will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south and sit at table in Your Kingdom. Hasten the

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day when your Kingdom will come in all its glory and suffering and pain and sickness and oppression and death will be overcome forever. Hasten the day when we will be resurrected as a great multicultural family and live in peace, harmony, joy and love together in your kingdom. AMEN

Hymn: Love came down at Christmas

Love came down at Christmas,
Love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas,
Star and angels gave the sign.

Love shall be our token,
Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men,
Love for plea and gift and sign.

Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, Love divine;
Worship we our Jesus:
But wherewith for sacred sign?

Christina G Rossetti
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Blessing

Enter into this Christmas with a fierce hope in your hearts – this world, this neighbourhood, this church, and each of us, can become a better, more hopeful, more peaceful, more loving place, by the grace of the Christmas God.
Go in peace, and build the kingdom. Amen.

To those of you that are not able to join us for any of our 'virtual, online' worship, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very blessed Christmas. I'm sure it is going to be somewhat different from usual. However, one thing remains constant and unchanging in the midst of all that is going on in the world around us and that is the love of God, in Christ Jesus. So as you celebrate Christmas in whatever way you can this year, be aware of Christ's light and love with you.

With love

Hilary