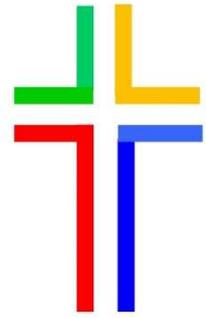


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 13 December



As we get ready for Christmas we are looking forward to a busy week. On Tuesday and Thursday we have our carols around the village; on Wednesday we're leading the Stratton Young Farmers' drive-in carol service at Stratton View Business Park (Chadds Foodsmiths) starting 7.30pm; next Sunday evening our Candlelit carol service at 6.30pm, as well as producing our third video worship. All the events will be very different to normal years. Please pray for our witness this coming week.

## PRAYER

We thank You that as we begin this worship, we know that what You have prepared for us is better than the very best dream. Your saving love was woven into Your creation from the very beginning, but to see what that love looks like we need to look at Jesus. Now, in this Advent Season,

as we wait for His coming, we are full of excitement for we know that the best is still to come. Fill our hearts with joyful hope, as we prepare to receive the best gift of all, Your Son Jesus, to be our Lord and our Saviour. **Amen**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

### READING FOR TODAY John 1:6-8; 19-28 (NIV)

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

<sup>19</sup> Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. <sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah.' <sup>21</sup> They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.'

<sup>22</sup> Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'

<sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."' "

<sup>24</sup> Now the Pharisees who had been sent <sup>25</sup> questioned him, 'Why then do you baptise if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'

<sup>26</sup> 'I baptise with water,' John replied, 'but among you stands one you do not know. <sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

<sup>28</sup> This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

## REFLECTION – being a good witness

It isn't easy being a good witness, is it? We have to look and listen carefully. John had to do that. He was being a witness to how special Jesus was, but Jesus hadn't actually done anything very special yet. John must have listened very hard to what God had to say by His Holy Spirit. That would have been the only way that he would have known how special Jesus was.

Part of John's role is to put Jesus first. To many people that would have been hard to do as John, in modern language, had celebrity status himself. Later on John says 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' John realised that Jesus was more important than he was, and the message that he was giving people about Jesus was more important too. I wonder how important do we see our task of telling others about Jesus to be? Do we always put this first?

The Bible tells us that if we invite Jesus to be Lord of our lives, then the Holy Spirit will make His dwelling in us. If we live in obedience to what God wants, then we should grow to be like Jesus. So each one of us ought to be a good witness to who Jesus is, not through what we say, so much as through the way that we live our lives. When people look at us, do they see the character of Jesus shining through? Sadly, we do not always live in the Jesus way. Other less attractive aspects of our character come through and they get in the way.

Christmas is a great opportunity to acknowledge the greatness of Jesus and put Him first in our lives. For His part, when His Holy Spirit makes His dwelling in us, He will enable us to have the courage to give a true witness for Him.

### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Advent God, you come to us in love, peace and joy. We thank you for love that nourishes and sustains our hearts, for peace that enables us to live in friendship with others for joy that illumines and inspires our lives.

We pray for those for whom joy seems far away and and is something others enjoy.  
...for all whose loneliness is actually made worse by parties, laughter and other people's joy:

...for bereaved people still hurting from the death of someone they have loved

...for wives, husbands and children, whose lives have been broken by break-up, and the dismantling of their hopes.

...for older people now living on their own, some of whom will see nobody over

Christmas

Lord in their loneliness,  
may these your children know your presence at this Christmas time. Through us comfort all those struggling at present. **Amen.**

### **HYMN H&P 81, StF 169**

Come, thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us;  
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's Strength and Consolation  
Hope of all the earth Thou art;  
Dear Desire of every nation  
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver  
Born a child and yet a King  
Born to reign in us forever  
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By Thine all sufficient merit  
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley 1707 -1788

### **THE GRACE**

Gracious God, You have come to us in Jesus, and you promise never to leave us. As we look towards Christmas, help us to be confident in your presence and in your promise.

And may the Blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**