

Devotion for the week leading to the 20th of December 2020

This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale, but with the intention of also being available for private use.

INTRODUCTION This year, our Bible readings have mostly been about Isaiah and the Old Testament prophecies, as they tell about the Messiah who is to come. This week our readings continue on this theme of God's promise to King David that the Messiah would be one of his descendants. We also look at God's call to Mary.

This week we use the Carol books instead of the usual Hymn books.

CAROL No. 7 - Hark the herald angels sing

You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.

PRAYER Lord God, we thank you for sending Jesus among us here, to become a part of human life on earth. We cannot understand how You were able to do it, but we are so grateful that You did. The mystery of God becoming a person is beyond us, but it fills us with joy. Thank you O God that you sent Jesus to Israel, 2000 years ago. He is the example to us of obedience and perfection. Thank you that He also showed us your love, acceptance and forgiveness. Now we can know personally that we are accepted, loved and forgiven by you. Help us to accept your love for ourselves, and to know how willing you are to forgive us. May this be true for each one of us we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

READING Psalm 89 : 1 - 4

CAROL No. 4 - Once in royal David's city

BIBLE READING - Luke 1 : 26 - 33 The angel calls Mary

REFLECTION

Sometimes God gives us a challenge. You may be able to remember a time in your life when you had something to do that was unusual or difficult, or something that other people might misunderstand.

In Israel, at the time of Jesus birth, girls generally married at about 15 to 17 years of age. The boys they married were generally a few years older, in their late teens or early 20's. Working class people only lived into their 50's. There were no anti-biotics back then and people often died of infections following accidents, or of disease. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary, a teenage girl, being told she was to become the mother of the Messiah? Can you imagine what it would be like for a secondary school girl these days to be told she would mysteriously become pregnant and have a baby who would become a greater leader than Prime Minister Robert Menzies and Reverend John Flynn rolled into one? You would wonder what was going on.

Here, in this Bible reading we have an insight into the way God works here on earth. For us, here on earth, God always lets us choose. Back in Old Testament times, God had chosen David to be king after Saul, but if David had refused, I suppose God would have found someone else. After all, God found David after Saul went silly. David chose to be the kind of king that God wanted him to be. Most of the time David did what God wanted, he went astray a few times, but God could see that his heart was in the right place.

God gave Mary a choice, just as he had given David a choice. If Mary had not agreed to be the mother of Jesus, then I expect that God would have found someone else. He waited until Mary agreed. God gives us a choice. God chooses what He would like us to do, but we can always choose to say no. How much better it is for us, and sometimes for others as well, if we say yes. It is then that God's will can be done on earth.

CAROL No. 15 - Infant Holy

PRAYER

Thank you, O Lord for all of the people who have said yes to You over the years. Thank you for the famous people like John Flynn - 'Flynn of the inland' and thank you too, for the ordinary people. We thank you for those who have helped us in our lives, both relatives and friends. We thank you too for those times when we had the courage to say 'yes' to You and what You wanted us to do. Today we pray for all of those people who are wondering if they can find the strength and courage to do what You especially want them to do.

We pray too for all those people who are worried about what they will be able to do this Christmas, because it has been a hard year for them. We pray for those who have been out of work, those who have been sick, and those who have had to work too hard because of the virus. We pray for our families and friends, that they might be safe, happy and well this Christmas, wherever they are. And we pray together:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, AMEN

HYMN No 9 - While shepherds watched their flocks by night

The BLESSING

May the blessing of the almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always, Amen