Order of Service Sunday 17th January 2021 (2nd Sunday after the Epiphany)

Service led by Debbie Wood

**Welcome and intro to first song**

“Come and see!” We are all invited to follow Jesus; the hope of all creation; the promise of the ages; Heaven’s invitation. Good morning and welcome to worship on this second Sunday after the Epiphany; my name is Debbie and I am a member of the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership. We will begin our worship with a song called “Come and See the Saviour” by Resound Worship.

**Song-** Come and See the Saviour

*And worship the Lamb,
and worship the Lamb.
Come, see heaven’s invitation.*

Come and see the saviour,
promise of the ages;
perfect gift from heaven
given now to save us.
Following the star,
wise men from afar
pour out their praise.
Come and see the saviour,
promise of the ages.

*And pour out your praise,
and pour out your praise.
Come, see heaven’s invitation.*

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Come and see the saviour,
heaven’s invitation;
image of the maker,
lying in a manger.
Angels fill the skies,
singing in the night:
Glory on high!
Come and see the saviour,
heaven’s invitation.

*Sing glory on high,
sing glory on high.
Come, see heaven’s invitation.*

Come and see the saviour,
hope of all creation;
healing for the nations,
mercy for the stranger.
Taken by surprise,
shepherds see the sign
and worship the Lamb.
Come and see the saviour,
hope of all creation.

**Prayers of thanksgiving and confession:**

Let us pray:

Loving God, we thank you for the many blessings that you give us. Help us to always see the gifts of the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives like the love of our family and friends, the joy of a robin singing, the peace of a sunset, the kindness of strangers; open our eyes to the wonder and majesty of Your love which surrounds us. Forgive us Lord when we fail to show those gifts of the fruit of the Spirit to others- when we are impatient or unkind in our thoughts, words or actions, when we choose darkness rather than goodness, when we are unforgiving and inconsiderate rather than gentle, when we are angry rather than self-controlled; forgive us and help us to open our eyes and hearts to Your ways, to be guided by the Holy Spirit so that we might be more Jesus-shaped in all we think, say and do. Amen

Let us join together now in saying 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. And 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.

**Children’s Address:**

What do all of these items have in common? That’s right, they all help us to see more clearly. I have to wear my glasses all the time otherwise I wouldn’t be able to read or you would look blurred to me; some people prefer contact lenses. When I drive my car, I sometimes need sunglasses so that I can see when the sun is blinding me so that I don’t crash! The other items all help me to see things more clearly by zooming in or making something appear closer so I can see it in greater detail. But not everyone sees with their eyes. Someone who has no sight might see through touch, for example reading using braille. But the word see can also mean to understand. When we say “I see” we mean “I understand” and that kind of seeing involves our hearts and minds. When we look for Jesus and let Him into our lives and hearts, we can see how we should behave, we can understand how to love others and put others before ourselves. We need to look at others and ourselves and see as Jesus sees; look for the goodness in each of us.

Now join us in our second song, Lift Up Your Eyes by Resound Worship:

**Song-** Lift Up Your Eyes

*Oh lift up your eyes see the King!
Worship the saviour, come praise him,
Jesus the Lord of all.
Oh once in a manger he lay;
now lifted high he is reigning,
Jesus the Lord of all.*

Lift up your eyes and look for him,
Jesus, the coming saviour-king;
now in your heart make room for him;
worship him, Lord of all.  (repeat)

*Oh lift up your eyes see the King!
Worship the saviour, come praise him,
Jesus the Lord of all.
Oh once in a manger he lay;
now lifted high he is reigning,
Jesus the Lord of all.*

Come worship him,
come bow down before him,
come praise him, Lord of all

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Lift up your eyes and look for him,
Jesus, the coming saviour-king;
born to redeem the world from sin,
bringing his peace to all.

Now if you walk in darkest night,
look for his dawn that’s breaking bright;
nothing shall ever stop this light
bringing new hope to all.

*Oh lift up your eyes see the King!
Worship the saviour, come praise him,
Jesus the Lord of all.
Oh once in a manger he lay;
now lifted high he is reigning,
Jesus the Lord of all.*

Soon you will see him come again,
not as the child of Bethlehem,
but the returning King to reign;
glorious Lord of all.

**Reading 1: John 1:43-51 NIV**

43The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”44Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” 46“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip. 47When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” 48“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” 49Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” 50Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” 51He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

**Reading 2: Hebrews 12:1-3 NIV**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

**Reflection:**

COME AND SEE! Epiphany is a season of light and revelation, a season of searching, discovering, finding, and knowing. In our first reading from John, Nathanael has an epiphany-defined in the dictionary as a moment of sudden and great revelation- his scepticism is transformed into faith and belief as he responds to Philip’s invitation to “Come and see” the one whom Moses wrote about. And why? Because Jesus sees him. Sees who he is at his core. Sees beyond the doubt and cynicism, beyond the prejudice Nathanael displays and of course sees him before he has even met him; Jesus knows of his purity of heart sees the man “in whom there is no deceit”. “How do you know me?” Nathanael asks and then the realisation that Jesus could only see who he is because he sees as God sees because he is the Son of God. Jesus sees in Nathanael the quality that makes him a person of beauty, an image-bearer, a child of God. For, as we are told in John 2:25, Jesus “did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.” So, when we accept the invitation to come and see, we must be ready to see ourselves and others as Jesus sees us. To look for the good, to see that each of us is worthy of love and salvation in the eyes of God. As Debbie Thomas wrote in her Journey with Jesus article in 2018: “To “come and see” is to approach all of life with a grace-filled curiosity, to believe that we are holy mysteries to each other, worthy of further exploration. To come and see is to enter into the joy of being deeply seen and deeply known, and to have the very best that lies hidden within us called out and called forth.” That is what the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King did -whose life is commemorated tomorrow. He was a man who dared to see as Jesus sees, a man who dared to summon the good in people, whatever their race, whether victim or oppressor. He was a man who in the face of racial hatred could still envision a world where, in his words, “justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” So, are we ready to accept this aspect of the challenge to come and see; to see as Jesus sees?

COME AND SEE! This command is an invitation, an invitation to follow Christ, to journey with Him. Just before Philip invites Nathanael to come and see, we hear, in this first chapter of John, how Jesus Himself invites two of John’s disciples who ask him where he is staying to “Come and see”. They go with Jesus and spend time with him and we are told how one of them, Andrew, then straight away goes to find his brother Simon and tells him:” “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.” Jesus calls Philip to follow Him and tells Nathanael that he will see greater things, that he “will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” How incredible is that! And within that promise is an expectation that they are going on a journey with Christ; that they are going to learn more about Him; that they will be witness to how He will change their lives, and our lives, forever; that they will commit to Him and follow Him so that they might see, might understand what it is to walk in the light; that they might realise how walking with Him means salvation; that they might see finally where He will be staying not just where he was staying on that afternoon when they first saw Him but where He would be staying for eternity- in His Father’s House and that they will have a place there with Him as Jesus tells his disciples in John 14. If we are to come and see what following Jesus leads to as those first disciples did, we have to believe what Jesus reveals in verse 6-7: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” We need to journey with Jesus, through prayer, through studying the Bible to learn more about Him and in fellowship with others who believe. We need to come and see who He is, to know Him, to follow His path, to love others as He loves us, to know him so that we can be like Him, to fulfil His command to us: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

COME AND SEE! The start of the book of John is all about seeing and witnessing the light and testifying about the light. John the Baptist who “came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe” shares his witness testimony in verses 29-34 which ends with John saying: **34 “**I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.” It was not and is not enough to come and see for ourselves. We, like Philip have to invite others to come and see. We like John and those first apostles have to be prepared to share our testimonies about how Christ has changed our lives and how He can change the lives of all those who turn to Him. Witnessing is not just about seeing it is about telling about what we have seen. But we are not alone when we do this, we are filled with His Spirit. We can only do this by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus as our reading from Hebrews reminds us. We cannot go it alone or we would “grow weary and lose heart.” It is when we turn our eyes upon Jesus and look full in his wonderful face- in the words of our next hymn- that we can find the courage when things are difficult, that we can be brave when we are scorned for our faith. We must keep our eyes fixed on Him so that we can endeavour to be more like Him so that we can be Jesus-shaped in all that we do which will enable us to witness about Him through our thoughts and words and actions.

We are told in John 1 verse 5 that “**5**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” As Christians we are witness to that and must be prepared to witness about that; so that, in the words of Desmond Tutu, all may see that there is light despite all the darkness; all may know the message of HOPE of the light that is Christ. So, let us COME AND SEE and journey through our lives with Christ, let us invite others to COME AND SEE through our Jesus-shaped lives and let us COME AND SEE ourselves and others as Jesus sees us. Let us keep looking, keep our eyes turned on Him, lift up our eyes and see the King! Amen.

****We will now sing the hymn Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus, sung here by Lauren Daigle **Song:**  Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus

His Word shall not fail you, He promised
Believe Him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying
His perfect salvation to tell

Oh turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

Oh turn your
Oh turn your
Oh turn your, eyes upon Jesus
Oh turn your
Oh turn your
Oh turn your, eyes upon Jesus

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**Prayers of Intercession- Debbie**

We now come to our prayers of intercession. After each prayer focus please join in with the words: “**Hear our prayers Lord, and let our vision be guided by Your light** ”

Dear Lord, we come to You in prayer, asking that You will open our eyes to see Your will, that Your light will guide our vision.

We pray for our precious world, asking that you will help us realise Your vision for Your beautiful creation of which you have given us stewardship. Help us to see the harm that mankind is causing our planet. Guide us to find solutions to the issues of climate change, habitat loss, pollution and diminishing natural resources. Give us the foresight to protect our planet and all its inhabitants so that we may once again behold our world in all its glory.

**Hear our prayers Lord, and let our vision be guided by Your light.**

We pray for the governments and religious leaders of our world asking that they will have the vision to work together for the good of all mankind, to realise the world You intended. We pray that they will be inspired by Your spirit to ensure we have a world that is at peace and that is fair and just for all. We pray particularly at this time that the governments of the world will see they need to work together to ensure that all nations benefit from the vaccines that have been created to bring an end to this global pandemic.

**Hear our prayers Lord, and let our vision be guided by Your light**

We pray for the Church across the world and ask that it be Jesus-shaped in all that it does. We pray that You will give our churches the vision to reach outwards; that Your church will shine with Your light penetrating the darkness of the world to share Your message of hope with those waiting to hear the good news of the Gospel. We pray that You will Help us to see through the eyes of those Christians who are persecuted for their faith- who share our faith but not our freedom. Give them strength and peace Lord as they bear their cross in Your name and let us be ready to journey alongside them to ‘come and see’ as they do.

**Hear our prayers Lord, and let our vision be guided by Your light.**

We pray for those in need. We pray that You will give us Your perspective to see the needs of others before ourselves, especially those marginalised in society as You did. Help us to see through the eyes of those affected by war so that we may work harder for peace. Help us to see through the eyes of those living in poverty so that we might advocate for fair sharing of wealth across the world. Help us to see through the eyes of those who are victims of trafficking and abuse and be moved to support them and those who work to help them. Help us to see through the eyes of refugees and all people who find themselves displaced and those experiencing homelessness so that we might welcome them and do more to help them and petition on their behalf, that all people across the world would have their basic human rights met.

**Hear our prayers Lord, and let our vision be guided by Your light.**

We pray for all those who are sick and give thanks for those caring for them. We ask that everyone might be enlightened to the plight of the NHS and health services across the world as they battle through this global pandemic; so that everyone might do their part to help stop the spread of this virus. We thank you for the vision of those who have worked so hard to produce the vaccines now being distributed. We continue to pray for Your healing touch to provide the miracles of medicine. We pray also for the bereaved and ask that You will comfort them and give them peace that they might discover solace in Your gift of everlasting life.

**Hear our prayers Lord, and let our vision be guided by Your light**

We offer all these prayers Lord and those in our hearts in the name of our great intercessor, Your son, Jesus Christ, the light of our vision, the ruler of all. **AMEN.**

We will now sing our final hymn; Be Thou my Vision

**Song-** Be Thou My Vision

 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

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 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my Wisdom, and thou my true Word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, and I thy true son,
Thou in me dwelling, and I with thee one.

**Blessing- Debbie**

Dear Lord, we thank you for all that we have shared together today. Thank you for inviting us to come and see the joy and light in following You. Help us to keep our eyes turned to You and to always be ready to invite others to come and see. Now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us today and always.

Amen