

Love came down at Christmas

Welcome

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..”

Our main aim for the morning will be to reflect on God’s love.

You will need... to find a comfortable place to sit and relax, where you can acknowledge but shut out any distractions around you.

You might like... to grab a drink, blanket, notepad and pen, and find a Bible of your choice to bookmark the following passages:

- **Luke 2:1-19**
- **1 Corinthians 13**

Preparation

We still ourselves and prepare our hearts, listening to [Love Came Down at Christmas - John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers, City of London Sinfonia - YouTube](#)

Prayer

We continue to quiet ourselves through a short time of prayer together

O Lord, open our lips
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Reveal among us the light of your presence
that we may behold your power and glory.

Blessed are you, Sovereign God of all,
to you be praise and glory for ever.

In your tender compassion
the dawn from on high is breaking upon us
to dispel the lingering shadows of night.
As we look for your coming among us this day,
open our eyes to behold your presence
and strengthen our hands to do your will,

that the world may rejoice and give you praise.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

Introduction

We begin with poetry – the ‘language of love’.

Love came down at Christmas

by Christina Rossetti

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

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

In the poem we have just read and heard, Christina Rossetti clearly expresses that **Jesus is love incarnate**.

We're going to use this poem to give shape to our morning, using **Luke 2:1-19 The Birth of Jesus** to explore the themes of the first two verses of the poem in our first meditation and reflection time. We are allowing around 45 minutes for this first time of silence.

I will now read out our first Bible passage for reflection and then the silence will begin.

[Luke 2:1-19 NRSV - The Birth of Jesus - In those days a - Bible Gateway](#)

Luke 2:1-19 The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in

bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.



As we look at ‘Love’ through the lens of the Christmas story:

Read through the text two or three times until you are thoroughly familiar with the story. Then allow the scene to gradually build up in your mind's eye.

Where are you? Take your own place in the unfolding scene. You may start as a bystander, or as one of the central characters, or simply enter into the story as yourself.

Take your time, see everything that is around, hear, feel, taste, and smell – every detail such as how the wind on the hillside bites your cheek, the smell of the place where the manger is found, the sound of your movement, breathing, or of your voice, and how your heart and mind respond.

Let yourself be drawn naturally into conversation with God or another participant. What are your

thoughts, expectations and feelings? Stay in the scene for as long as you have chosen to, and then draw the time to a close with a prayer of thanks.

It might help for you to think about...

Where is the love in the nativity story - what does love look like in that time and place?

What is surprising or new, what is expected?

It might help for you to reflect on...

“Freely you have received”

How does it feel to receive God's love?

We return at 10.45 with a cuppa for an opportunity to discuss our thoughts and what God has been showing us. We may sing or listen to the words of Come down O love divine, too. If you wish to remain in the silence, please ensure your microphone is on mute as a sign to others – and you may wish to turn your camera off, too.

In our second time of reflection we will use 1 Corinthians 13 as a base from which to explore the question that Rosetti poses in the end of verse two: **what is the ‘sacred sign’ of our faith in Jesus our Saviour, love incarnate?**

Again, we will allow around 45 minutes to remain with the passage in silence, but feel free to spend longer reflecting on it if you feel so led.

I will now read out our second Bible passage for reflection, and then the silence will begin.



[1 corinthians 13 NRSV - The Gift of Love - If I speak in the - Bible Gateway](#)

1 Corinthians 13:

The Gift of Love

13 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴ Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹ For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰ but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Some suggestions to help you look at 'Love' through the lens of the letter to the Corinthians:

It might help for you to revisit the question that Rosetti poses in her poem:
what is the 'sacred sign' of our faith in Jesus our Saviour, love incarnate?

It might help for you to think about...

This passage is set in a different context (time and place) – after Jesus's birth death and resurrection. What does love look like in wider society, and in the church in Corinth? What does love look like today – in society, and in Christian circles?

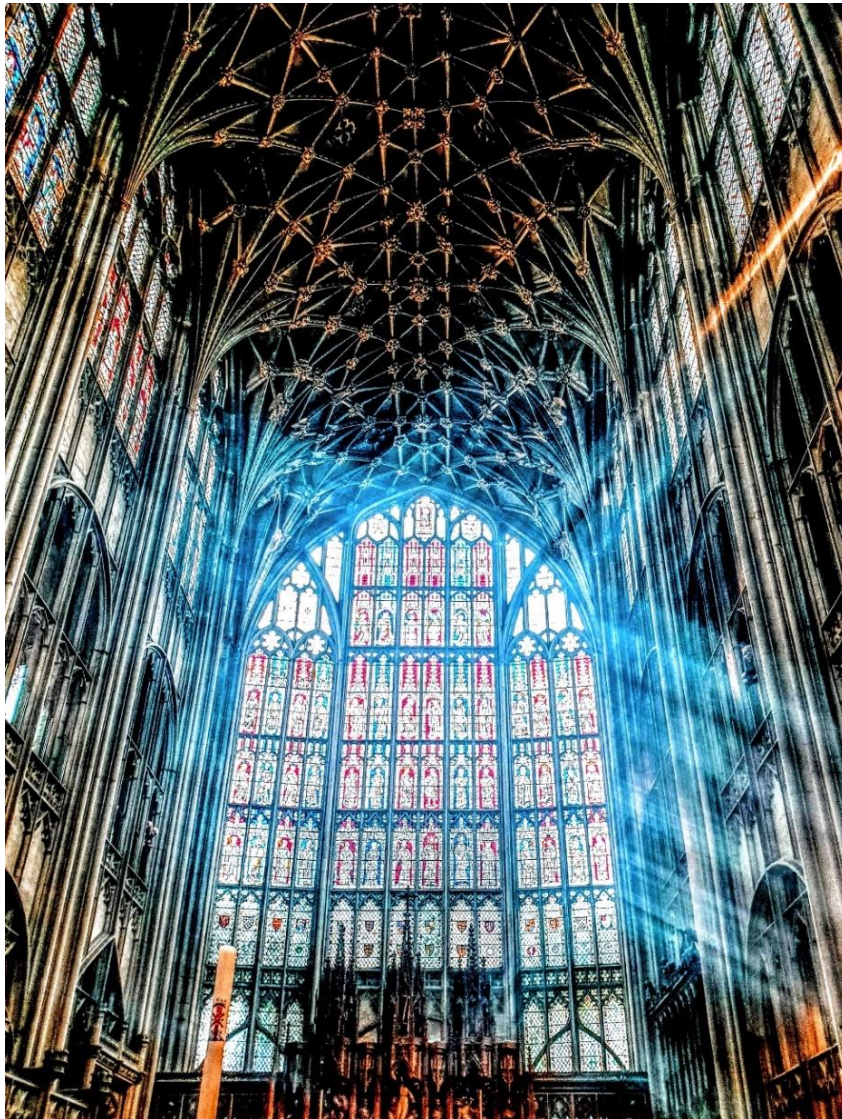
It might help for you to try to re-read the passage...

and this time substitute the word 'love' (and 'it' or 'its' in verses 5-7) for 'Jesus'. How does that affect the way you respond?

It might help for you to reflect on...

"Freely give"

How are we as Christians called to embody God's love to one another? What about in your own life? How is God calling you to love afresh today?



Photo, printed with permission, by Aaron Herring.

We return at 12noon to collect our thoughts and experiences together with a brief time of shared reflections on the passages before committing ourselves to sharing God's love in the time to come.

Love came down at Christmas

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



As Jesus sent out twelve of his disciples, he said:

As you go, proclaim the message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.'

We say together:

**Send us out in the power of your Spirit,
send us out in the strength of your love,
to live and work to your praise and glory
in the name of Christ.**

**Send us out in the hope of your promise,
send us out in the light of your word,
to love and serve as the hands and feet
of our Saviour, Christ.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen.

Wishing you love this Christmas, thank you!

NEXT QUIET DAY:

Epiphany in the Quiet 9.30 am, Thursday 7 Jan 2021.