

WELCOME once again to our time of worship

### LET US BEGIN WITH PRAYER:

Lord God forgive our casual attitude to your Son and his call on us to share the faith. Our Father, join us as we try to centre our life around Jesus, feeble though our efforts are. Lord join us, enrich us and forgive us our times of fear, failure and uncertainty. Bring us through Lord for you, empower us with your spirit for the road ahead - in Jesus, name we ask,  
Amen

### HYMN AHB 451 by Patrick Appleford

1. Lord Jesus Christ you have come to us, You are one with us, Mary's son  
Cleansing our souls from all their sin, pouring your love and goodness in,  
Jesus our love for you we sing, living Lord.
2. Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day, teach us how to pray, Son of God,  
You have commanded us to do this in remembrance, Lord, of you:  
Into our lives your power breaks through, living Lord.
3. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, born as one of us, Mary's son:  
Led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free  
Living Lord Jesus, help us see, you are Lord.
4. Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you, live my life for you, Son of God,  
All your commands I know are true, your many gifts will make me new,  
Into my life your power breaks through, living Lord.

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### Bible Readings and Message:

- Malachi 3: 1-4

*“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.*

*But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years.*

There are many references to the coming Messiah in the old testament. There is a longing, at times a lament (Jeremiah) that the Messiah has not already come. In the midst of the unfaithfulness and waywardness of God's people, the pure unadulterated wickedness- (human sacrifice in God's house) yep, even in the Kidron valley just near Jerusalem the Gods of Baal, Marduk, and others were venerated in GOD's house. Was it any wonder that the prophets and the few faithful Kings (e.g. Josiah) were at their wits end in LONGING for the Messiah . Malachi, circa 430 BC, is one example as he reminds the people of their neglect of the temple and false worship. But hope is not lost for God

will come, and he will renew through fire – he will sit at a refiner’s fire. The powerful metaphor here is that the refiner will look at the ladle, scrape off the dross, and when (ONLY THEN) the image of the refiner is clearly visible—then and only then can it be poured and shaped into an ingot (renewal in Christ! The atonement!!) So in spite of all the mess, when the longing is fulfilled “I have loved you says the Lord” v1-- and I will restore you.

Recall the longing of Elizabeth for a child. Her wretchedness and loneliness, her longing to be fulfilled in her old age was a painful and lonely time. But both her and her husband (Zechariah) remained faithful to God. She became pregnant! And when Mary visited her, the baby in her womb (Luke 1:57) – John the Baptist – leaped for Joy!!

- Romans 8: 18-27

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.*

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*

Christmas has just gone - what did we long for? WE were not longing for any THING, because like most older Australians there is nothing we need. Maybe like Elisha, a double helping of the Spirit would be an unreal gift. However Paul’s advice to the Roman church is to not long for anything of this world, wait for what is truly worthwhile – now but not yet. Somewhat frustratingly Paul says just wait patiently (I confess to not being a patient person) so therein lies the challenge for me, and maybe others? It’s clear enough that our Lord is coming back (Matt 24, promises and warnings). Longing for the day will not help, nor will it speed things up. Matt 24:36.

**HYMN AHB 520** by Frances Ridley Havergal 1836-79.

1. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.  
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in endless praise,
2. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee,
3. Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee,

“THE LONGING”

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4. Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use every power as thou shalt choose,
  5. Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne,
  6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.
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HYMN “I COME TO THE GARDEN” *by Charles A Miles.*

1. I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses,  
And the voice I hear falling on my ear the Son of God discloses.  
*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there,  
None other has ever known.*
  2. He speaks, and the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing,  
And the melody that He gave to me within my heart is ringing.
  3. I'd stay in the garden with Him, though the night around me be falling,  
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe His voice to me is calling.
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