

WEEK 4 ADVENT DECEMBER 21ST 2025

CHRIST'S LOVE REVEALED THROUGH US

Our Advent journey began four weeks ago, a time of anticipation and preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth. It's a time given to us when (if we allow ourselves) to sit quietly to deeply reflect on our expression of God's love, particularly as it's expressed through the life, witness and work of Jesus Christ. This season not only marks a time of waiting but also compels us to consider how we can reflect that divine love in our own lives. Both Isaiah and Matthew serve as thoughtful reminders of the Incarnation – that moment when God's love took on human flesh and became one like us.

Through Isaiah, we encounter a conversation between influential people – one a king, being King Ahaz and the other the prophet Isaiah. Ahaz is fearful because of the threats surrounding his kingdom. Isaiah reflects back to him God's words asking for a sign to bolster his faith. Ahaz, despite being challenged to trust in God, hesitates, demonstrating a lack of faith – he who hesitates is lost. In response, Isaiah boldly, declares that the Lord will give a sign: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel". Isaiah's prophecy takes us directly to the miraculous birth of Jesus, emphasising that God is with us.

They say your name says a lot about who you are, so in this case the name "Immanuel", meaning "God with us" is the very essence of Christ's love. In Jesus, God has stepped into our human story, experiencing the full spectrum of what is to be a person of flesh just like us. Through the scriptures we know Jesus felt, joys, hope, sorrow, pain, disappointment, his moment of fear in the garden of

Gethsemane, annoyance, forgiveness, love, and trust in God his Father. During Advent, we remember that this great act of love wasn't a distant historical event, but an ongoing reality that desires to saturate our lives with grace and compassion. Christ's presence among us constantly and consistently challenges us to reflect this love outwardly, urging us to be the connection point of his light in a world that often seems overshadowed by despair, violence, and a desire to cause some form of harm to others. We are to be Christ's light in their darkness guiding them towards the light.

We don't know a lot about Joseph; however, in Matthew we do hear about just how much Joseph experienced a life turned upside down event with the news of Mary's pregnancy. Conflicted and troubled, he initially contemplates quietly ending the engagement. However, and thankfully, an angel appears to him in a dream, reassuring him that it will be okay to take Mary as his wife – all will be well. He can do this because as we know, her child isn't any ordinary child, he is a very special baby who was conceived in her from the Holy Spirit. The angel's message takes us further into just how significant this baby's birth will be and gives an instruction to Joseph to name him "Jesus," for he will save his people from their sins. In the time of Mary and Joseph, it was traditionally left up to the mother to name the child, and it was a significant event reflecting the circumstances of the birth, hopes and dreams and the child's character as well as her identity as a mother. So, for Joseph to be naming the baby is rather counter cultural for the time.

The response from Joseph to this divine revelation is rather significant. Rather than clinging to his own fears and societal expectations, he chooses obedience, expressing love and courage.

His willingness to support Mary, despite the societal stigma they would face, shows us how love can motivate radical, transformative action. In the face of uncertainty, he exemplifies how we can embody Christ's love – a love that is bold, unconditional, fearless, and selfless.

As we continue to reflect on Jesus and his birth during our time of waiting in Advent, we are challenged to emulate the love shown to us through Isaiah and Joseph. God's love isn't meant to live just within us; rather, it beckons us to share it freely with a world which is fragmented by division, pain, and misunderstanding, we are invited to be vessels of reconciliation, understanding, and community. Not empty vessels making a lot of noise, vessels clearly expressing Christlike love.

This season, we may ask ourselves how we can embody Immanuel, how we can bring God's presence into our families, workplaces, and communities. Are there relationships in need of healing? Are there opportunities to serve those who are struggling? Christ's love compels us to step beyond our comfort zones, reflecting the light of Christ wherever there is darkness and shadows.

During Advent there's also the chance for self-reflection and ask ourselves how willing are we to make ourselves vulnerable in ways like Joseph did especially if it causes a disruption in our daily lives. Do we have the courage to embrace the role of love in our daily interactions? Perhaps it entails reaching out to someone in need, showing kindness to a stranger, or simply being the listening ear for a while. Being open and ready to share Christ's love with an open heart rather than a closed and hardened heart.

As we prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth, may we remember that his love is meant to flow through us. Just as his presence transformed the world at his birth, our acts of love can transform the lives of those around us. In the love of Christ, we find a power that not only changes us but also has the potential to heal the world.

In the days which are left leading to Christmas, may we all reflect on how our lives can reflect Christ's love, igniting hope and joy in a world longing for God. Such is the essence of Advent- a time to anticipate, embrace, and share the borderless and boundless love of Immanuel.

Amen

Let us pray

God of love,

We entered this Advent season with hope and anticipation, we come before you with open hearts. Teach us to embrace each moment with kindness, reflecting your love in all we do. May our lives be made lighter and brighter by the warmth of compassion, drawing us closer to one another and to you. Help us to recognise the beauty in diversity and the strength in unity, as we prepare for the joyous celebration of Christ's birth. Fill our hearts with peace and joy, that we may share the gift of love of Christ with the world.

Amen