

Moment

Here is the moment
light gathers herself
and in a whispered word of promise
spills into the world
in a cascade of hope
and takes shape in flesh

Here is the moment
when the word finds a voice
daring enough to speak to the world
a cry
and a protest
to challenge the root of our living

Here is the moment
love hesitates
restless with the shape of it's skin
and gasps
with it's first breath
'Emmanuel, God is with us'

rg
24th november 2011

advent, challenge, change
isaiah 64:1-9
advent 1b

It is advent

It is advent

and the time is heavy
with the word of the prophets

the old religion
and the ancients
conspire against a fickle world
with words of poetry
filled with promise

listen to the longing of the universe
that we might hear
the oldest of all words
and make space
that he be born
among us

the time is heavy
with the word of the prophets

may our longing for renewal
be the invitation
for this word
to put on flesh

rg
24th november 2011

prophets, advent, incarnation
isaiah 64:1-9
advent 1b

Tear Open

An act of confession and petition:
to make room for advent in the world.

Both readers have a sheet of newspaper. They read a story and tear the paper in half while reading the final lines "O that you would tear open..."

Voice 1:

Tens of thousands of protesters have packed into central Cairo's Tahrir Square to demand that Egypt's military rulers step aside.

The demonstrators want the postponement of elections due to start on Monday.

The Prime Minister-designate has said he will not form a new cabinet until after the polls.

The latest wave of protests has led to the worst violence since the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in February. More than 40 people have been killed.

Tear the paper in half

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down

O prince of peace

Voice 2:

The UK will continue to see a big rise in the number of people living in poverty, a report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has warned.

The study said 2.2 million children and two million working age adults were living in absolute poverty in 2009-10.

It predicts that by 2012-13, this will rise by an extra 600,000 children and 800,000 adults of working age.

In percentage terms, 17% of UK children were living in absolute poverty in 2009-10. By 2012-13, the IFS predicts this will rise to 21.8%.

People below the poverty line have a household income at least 60% less than the national average.

Tear the paper in half

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down

O breaker of bread

Voice 1:

Big-name actors and the families of some high-profile victims of crime joined other public figures and ordinary people at the Leveson Inquiry to call for press regulation and tighter controls on British tabloids.

It was the turn of Gerry and Kate McCann on Wednesday, who said they were distraught by press suggestions they were somehow responsible for the disappearance of their missing daughter Madeleine during a family holiday in Portugal in 2007.

Mr McCann said many of the stories were untruthful, sinister or, he believed, made up - and his wife said seeing her private diary published in the News of the World made her feel "totally violated".

Tear the paper in half

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down

O Word of Justice

Voice 2:

MANY of Britain's biggest companies are scaling back investment and employment plans for next year amid fears of a second banking crisis brought on by the Eurozone, the country's most prominent business group warns today.

On the eve of its annual conference, a bleak survey from the CBI reveals that 70 per cent of the UK's captains of industry say their confidence has been badly damaged by the European financial and political turmoil that has been raging since August.

John Cridland, warned that events in Europe and faltering UK economic growth meant the country was "at a critical tipping point. The survey shows that business confidence has been hit by the Eurozone crisis and fears of a secondary banking crisis in 2012, so firms are revising their investment and employment plans."

Tear the paper in half

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down
O light of the World

Voice 3:

And the prophet said:

Since before time began

no one has ever imagined,

No ear heard, no eye seen, a God like you

who works for those who wait for him.

May we let you tear through all that crowds you out
and make space for you this advent

rgb

26th november 2011

transformation, revolution, advent

isaiah 64:1-9

advent 1b

Prepare Ye (I)

One narrator plus a chorus of voices all move up the aisle. The chorus is in a circle surrounding the reader, creeping and alert getting louder each time they speak.

from the wilderness
the stones turn
the tumbleweed rolls
the dust eddies
as the call moves across the desert

whispered
prepare ye
prepare ye the way

the locust pauses
on a hot rock
just too long
as grubby fingers
sticky with honey
pinches it's neck
ready for supper

louder
prepare ye
prepare ye the way

and then the voice
rasping with the dryness
gathers up it's breath
and clears it's throat
and in the echo of the valley
shouts:

louder
prepare ye
prepare ye the way (*continue in a whisper through the rest of the words*)

and stones turn
tumbleweed rolls
dust eddies
as the call of the Baptist
moves across the desert
readying the moment
and the people
for the good news
of Jesus Christ

rg
27th november 2011

prepare, wilderness, good news
mark 1:1-8
advent 2b

The Note

Once there was a musical note that didn't have a chorus or a symphony or song to belong to. It just hung there, a little out of tune and a bit flat. No one wanted it. All the songs had the notes they needed and an extra one would ruin their structure and sound and rhythm. So it was left discarded by the edge.

Every so often it tried to make a sound, a beautiful sound that great singers would want to imitate, or great composers would want to use, but it was no use, whenever it tried so make it's sound, it just coughed and spluttered and whimpered. It decided never to make a sound ever again.

But suddenly everything went very quiet. A hush that descended across the whole world. People could talk but all the talked about was how quiet everything seemed to be. Musicians could play their pieces and they all sounded wonderful but there was a deeper hush, a silence that went right down to the insides of people. And people noticed.

The note was very sad. It noticed the great big silence. It didn't know why it had happened or what to do to make it better. it just knew it was very quiet. The music the musician played was beautiful but it seemed empty and the words and songs people sang were lonely but again they seemed very empty.

One day the note was wandering through all the music one Christmas time. It had never listened all the way through a piece and decided to listen. And it heard of stars gathering and angels singing and it wondered 'why?' Then it heard of ancient words telling of a special birth and it wondered 'whose?' Then it heard about shepherds travelling and wise men journeying and it wondered 'where?'

And it listened right to the end to find out and suddenly it couldn't help itself. It sang out as loud as it could when it heard about a baby called Jesus being born in a stable and all the hopes that rested on him. And the note sang as loud as it had ever sung. It went through long cadences and scales and arpeggios as if heard the news. It trilled with vibrato and with a great crescendo filled the air around it with all the music it could muster. it just couldn't help itself.

And suddenly the whole world was singing again. The sheep bleated and the cows mooed, the wind whistled and the trees whispered, the waves roared and the earth groaned the birds sang and the baby cried.

You see this wasn't just a musical note, this note was the note of hope and whenever anyone heard it, that note of hope for the world, they couldn't help themselves but sing. This sing note was the star of a great worldwide symphony that has been singing ever since. The note was not meant to sound a perfect pitch but was the sound of a great cry of hope that came deep from inside people's souls, and the whole of creation began to sing because it had finally heard this one, solitary, forgotten note of hope.

rg
1st december 2011

hope, sound, song
mark 1:1-8
advent 2b

Here is

a call to worship

Here is the baptizer
But he is not God
he is the witness of God

Here is light
But this is not God
it is a sign of God

Here is bread
But this is not God
it is a taste of God

Here is water:
But this is not God
it is a way to God

Here is the Word
But this is not God
it is the breath of God

Here is Advent
But this is not God
it is the promise of God

Here are gifts: giving, caring, renewing, loving
This is God

rg
8th December 2011

hope, sound, song
john 1:6-8, 18-26
advent 3b

John's I am not

Sometimes we put too much emphasis on things of the faith, saying this is right, this is how it is, this is certain. In John the Baptizer we find a person who defines himself by describing what he is not. This contemporary reading is a litany, a theological list, of what John isn't and what he is. Perhaps in hearing it we hear more deeply about who we are as a community waiting on the edge of wilderness, what we are *not* and what we are called to be...

A: I am not the main player

B: the focus

A: the purpose

B: the point

BOTH: I am the forerunner who tells of one yet to come

A: I am not the verdict

B: the judgement

A: the directive

B: the finding

BOTH: I am the witness that has seen what God is going to do

A: I am not the headline

B: the main story

A: the star

B: the title

BOTH: I am the voice, proclaiming get out the way of the one who is coming

A: I am not status quo

B: the compliance

A: the easy life

B: the compromise

BOTH: I am the challenger who calls for repentance for The One is soon

A: I am not what is popular

B: approved

A: in vogue

B: pleasing

BOTH: I am the antagonist whose message is plain: turn away from what you are doing, in God's name

A: I am not the timid

B: the shy

A: the bashful

B: the sober

BOTH: the I am the defiance against all religion that is mundane and blind

A: I am not the expert

B: the virtuoso

A: the distinguished

B: the authority

BOTH: I am the troublemaker for all who are so settled they might miss God's arrival

A: I am not the One

B: the Messiah

A: Elijah

B: the prophet

BOTH: I am the Baptizer and this is not about me. The one it is about, I am not fit to untie his sandals.

rgH

9th december 2011

john the baptizer, church, call

john 1:6-8, 18-26

advent 3b

Past where we are

A box at the beginning of service has label: "Meaning of Christmas". Bit of the word INCARNATION are brought out at different times and put together to make sense. Once the word is complete help people understand what "incarnation" means through this statement.

may the stars take us
past where we are
to the place of promise
alive with light
we believe in incarnation

may the prophets call us
past where we are
onto the way of vision
alive with hope
we believe in incarnation

may the shepherds lead us
past where we are
to the Good news
alive among us
we believe in incarnation

may the wise ones guide us
past where we are
to further journeys
alive with adventures
we believe in incarnation

may love call us
past where we are
to a bigger world
alive with justice
we believe in incarnation

may Jesus invite us
past where we are
to unexpected places
alive with God
we believe in incarnation

rg
14th december 2011

incarnation, nativity, belief
luke 1:26-38
advent 4b

Waiting

The stable:
It waits its turn

The angels:
They wait for the chorus

The stars:
They wait to guide

The light:
It waits to break through

The prophets:
They wait to hear

The Shepherds:
They wait to proclaim

The wise ones:
They wait to visit

The parents:
they wait to love

Us
We wait to rejoice

All are waiting for God
for God is not yet ready
But soon
very soon

rg
15th december 2011

waiting, nativity, time
luke 1:26-38
advent 4b

This Night

May you know
the promise you are
and are yet to become
this night

May you know
the light alive in your eyes
that offers hope to the world
this night

May you know
the deepness of time on your skin
the most ancient tangling with the most new
this night

May you know
the sound of muffled laughter
of waiting angels ready with good news
this night

May you know
the gift of love
as the universe curves to hold it all
this night

May you know
the silence of heaven
as she lets go her beloved to be born
this night

rg
15th december 2011

christmas eve, love, gift
luke 1:26-38
Christmas eve b

Mary Said...

a: Mary said...

b: Mary said nothing

a: Nothing?

b: Nothing!

a: That's unusual for you!

(gives a look)

a: Mary said...

b: Mary said 'No Way!'

a 'No way'?

b: Well what else do you expect me to say when an angel knocks on the door dressed in a glowing smock with wings fluttering and halos polished and a great scroll with a message.

a: Do angels look like that?

b: No, but you wouldn't believe me if I told you the truth. It's not exactly an every day occurrence.

a: I thought you liked surprises!

b: Yeh, like a new pair of shoes surprise, but not this.

(pause)

a: Mary said...

b: Mary said nothing.

a: Again? Left speechless. What does that angels have that I don't.

b: Many things.

(that look again)

a: Mary said...

b: Mary said 'No Way!'

a: but you've already said that.

b: I know but there is only so much you can say when you are given the news I've just received.

a: O do tell!

(that look)

a: let me guess: that's between you and the angel?

b: That's between me and the angel!

(pause)

a: Mary said...

b: O stop going on about what I did and didn't say.

a: But we're all interested: you usually have a lot to say.

(that look)

a: Go on...

b: Okay, Mary said:

one: is this some kind of joke?;

two: why me?;

three: are you sure you've come to the right door?;

four: can it be true?;

five: when will this happen?;

six: do I have a choice?;

seven: is it really me God wants?;

eight: have you thought this one through?;

nine: what's plan B?;

and ten: is this the only way?

a: and what did the angel say?

b: the angel said '*all* the above!'

a: so what was your answer?

b: Mary said...

(looooooong pause)

b: 'Yes!'

rg
15th december 2011

mary, choice, annunciation
luke 1:26-38
Christmas eve b

Manger

Joseph just sat there... staring... eyes fixed on the manger... that seemed to glow with a deep golden light... Everything was quiet... at last... Mary was asleep on his lap... the shepherds had left and so had some of the smell they had brought with them... a triplet of kings had popped in with some gifts but were now on their way back east... even the animals had decided to have an early night... and the new baby... was newly asleep... and everything had gone silent... except Josephs heart that was beating rapidly with a mix of fear and wonder... but only he could hear that... Everywhere else in that stable... it was a hushed silence... so silent you could almost hear the star twinkle... that had arrived earlier in the evening over the stable... It was very... very quiet... wearily quiet... exhausted quiet...

But Joseph didn't like it... He wanted to shout out aloud that his son... yes his son... had been born... and he was the most wonderful being in the world...

He wanted to waken Mary... and tell her again... that his soul tingled... every time he whispered Jesus' name...

He didn't have time to be exhausted... Jesus was only a few hours old and already Joseph was busy thinking about what his son would grow into... And he was too busy watching and counting every breath he took... so vulnerable... How could God be so vulnerable... so trusting... to let the son of heaven... fall into the straw of this manger... and for him to be the one to keep an eye on...

Come to think of it... it dawned on him... In all the world... in all this massive world... he had been left in charge... GULP!... he didn't have time to close his eyes... With a sudden rush of fear... he realised he alone had been left in charge... of the entire world's salvation...

He swallowed hard... and kept staring... But it wasn't difficult to be there... alone... awake... and soon the wonder took over from the fear...

Just at that moment Jesus turned his head... opened his eyes... gurgled... and Joseph held his breath... taking a gulp of air only when Jesus cooed down in the straw and fell asleep again...

This was what God looked like... thought Joseph... tiny wee and fresh born... helpless... and fragile... with only him looking after him...

Joseph tried to ignore that thought when Jesus... stirring in his sleep... lifted his tiny hand... Joseph stretched out and with his pinky let Jesus curl his little hand round it... And this is what God feels like... thought Joseph... But the wonder was so great... that Joseph began to feel his eyes grow heavy... and his head nod... but he kept his finger steady with Jesus hand clutching it... and as Joseph finally gave into sleep... he wondered if he was holding Jesus... or was the Saviour of the world... was holding him...

rg
20th december 2011

manger, joseph, vulnerable
luke 1:46-56
christmas eve b

Waiting Time

For the brink of midnight

Time
holds it's breath tonight
on the brink of incarnation

God
hesitates tonight
about to let go the son into the arms of a vulnerable woman

Light
worries tonight
for the expanse of darkness seems so great and it so fragile

A young mother
is anxious tonight
in becoming the inexperienced mother of God's only son

A father
paces tonight
willing to take on more than ought to have been asked of him

The universe
pauses tonight
waiting a moment longer for the news

Pause

Light candle

The moment is here
there is no going back
the promise is fulfilled
the prophets have been heard
the incarnation has begun
and the infant word of God
is filling his lungs
with his first human breath

Jesus cries in human form
God is among us

rgb
21st december 2011

time, waiting, worry
isaiah
christmas eve b

We believe in Christmas

We believe in Christmas
We believe the words of the prophet
that speak of justice to the oppressed
and care for the widow
is God's word
that sets the world free
For love came down at Christmas
We believe in Christmas

Yes, we believe in Christmas
We believe the light of the world
that crushes all darkness
and exposes all lies
is God's light
that shines through every darkness
For love came down at Christmas
We believe in Christmas

Yes we believe in Christmas
We believe the song of the angels
that celebrates peace on earth
and to all people on the earth
is God's peace
that the world can't find
but Jesus can offer
For love came down at Christmas
We believe in Christmas

Yes, we believe in Christmas
We believe Mary's poem Magnificat
that God turns everything upside down
where the poor are lifted up
and the powerful are brought down
is God's poem
that changes the balance of the world
For love came down at Christmas
We believe in Christmas

Yes, we believe in Christmas
We believe the word becomes flesh
the promise is fulfilled
the light breaks through
the oppressed are set free
the lowly lifted up
and the baby cries
For love came down at Christmas
We believe in Christmas

rgH
23rd december 2011

belief, love, incarnation
Luke 2:1-16
christmas day b