#  Second Sunday of Advent: Comforted to comfort

*From God our heavenly Father
A blessèd angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy!*

**(‘God rest you merry, gentlemen’ from *Christmas Collection*, no. 33)**

## Scripture

* Matthew 5:4 ‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.’
* 2 Corinthians 1:3-4‘Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.’

## Introduction

* It’s sobering to think that God sent Jesus into the world at just the right time. ‘But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law’ (Galatians 4:4).
* The Roman Empire was ruthless, unjust and exploitative for many. The announcement of Jesus’ coming and his imminent birth in Bethlehem would change the course of history and bring comfort to a suffering world.

## Context

* God promises us that those who mourn will be comforted (Matthew 5:4). This is still a sweet balm to those who still live under oppressive regimes, who are grieving, who are lonely, who are sick, who suffer because of injustice or conflict, who are lonely or excluded. As well as comfort, there is the promise of joy that Jesus elaborated on in later years. In John 15:11 he says: ‘I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.’
* The Lord Jesus Christ not only comforts us in our troubles, but does so ‘that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God’ (2 Corinthians 1:4). In this season, how can we comfort others with the comfort we have received?

## Reflection – looking inwards

* Are we being challenged to put the ‘salve’ into salvation

(where ‘salve’ is a healing and comforting ointment)? Salvation is

not a harsh or condemning message – it is proclaimed tenderly and from people with hearts full of love and compassion.

* Comfort is offered to ‘those who mourn’. People mourn for what they have lost or perceive they have lost. The question here is, are we comforted by ‘having’ or by ‘being’? We are not comforted by the restoration of what is lost, but by the very presence of Christ who will never abandon us.
* If I have Christ, I have everything – the chorus ‘Jesus, thou art everything to me’ (*SASB* 502) reminds us of this message. The chorus says, ‘All my lasting joys are found in thee.’ Having Jesus as part of our lives provides comfort in mourning and lasting joys.

## Reflection – looking outwards

* As mentioned earlier, the Lord Jesus Christ not only comforts us in our troubles but does so ‘that we can comfort those in trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God’ (2 Corinthians 1:4). FB Meyer writes: ‘Remember that you are being comforted in order to comfort others.’ In our modern world there are many opportunities to offer comfort to people who have lost their way, who suffer from low self-esteem, and who feel excluded, lonely and unloved. How do we show and tell people that they are loved and valued by God?
* How does it make you feel knowing that, despite all that is happening around us, God sees and God cares for everyone?
* In what ways is our fellowship comforting vulnerable and broken people? In the present climate we can highlight those people who are exploited through human trafficking and modern slavery, economic hardship, domestic violence and social inequalities that exclude and marginalise people. Our actions and prayers can be focused on bringing comfort to others in our community.
* Have you ever noticed that frequently the same people who have experienced significant personal trauma and loss themselves, and who have received comfort and support in their darkest hours, use that negative experience to help others? Many charities have been founded by people who have suffered or gone through unimaginable hardship, only to turn the situation around and prove that darkness does not extinguish light! ‘The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned’ (Isaiah 9:2).

## Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, I ask for your comforting presence today. I understand that it is being in your loving presence that will bring healing and comfort in my life. Help me to realise that materialistic ‘having’ brings no deep or real soul comfort at all. As I experience your comforting presence, please allow my life to be a healing balm to people in my community. In Jesus’ name. Amen.