



ALL IS BRIGHT

**Theme Resource Pack
December 2024
(1-28 December)**

Introduction

*Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, **all is bright...***

These lines beautifully describe a precious peaceful moment the night our saviour Jesus was born. An impossibly small treasure, a beautiful scrap of humanity in the eye of the storm.

'Silent Night' was written in Germany in the 19th century by Joseph Mohr and was declared an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2011 to acknowledge the enormous power of this song. The simple words and melody are spine-tingling and reverberate around the world each December. In the cold and dark humanity remembers the bright light that came one dark night.

On the one hand at this time of year it can seem like all is indeed bright as our homes, shopping centres and streets are lit up 24/7 but the reality is it can also feel dark, cold and grim for a host of reasons. Christmas can be a bleak time for many, with the financial and social pressures of the season compounding issues of poverty, injustice, isolation and grief.

In the midst of pressing economic, political and ecological forces what do we mean when we dare to say 'all is bright' this Christmas? In a world that knows only too well hostility, cruelty and inequality, where are we seeing the brightness?

We are seeing it in Emmanuel — the wonder of God with us! Jesus light of the world shines through everything, we read in Colossians 1 that it is through Christ 'that all things hold together and have their being'! Christ's light cannot be put out it is literally woven into reality. In the middle of a dark and shabby stable, on a dark and inhospitable night, in a dark and dangerous time — all was bright through God's gift of Jesus Christ to the world. Jesus came to redeem and restore our world — to help us see the brightness in everything and Christ has redeemed the world and is going on redeeming the world!

The light of Jesus cannot be extinguished, the darkness will never overcome it. This Christmas let's rediscover the bright multi-coloured light of Christ that shines in and through everything, even if it's sometimes hard to see. And as well as seeing the brightness, how are *being* the brightness? Carrying the multifaceted light of Christ with us? That light that illuminates the goodness in creation, the harmony we were meant for.

We are not beyond hope, beyond redemption, the light still burns, all is bright! Let's revisit the timeless story of the nativity and have our eyes wide open to the bright colours that empower, enthuse and enlighten us in the face of cruelty, injustice, poverty, isolation and inequality.

Because into the noise of disruption and upheaval, pain and confusion comes a beautiful moment of quiet each year that reminds us that all is — indeed — bright.

Weekly Overview

- Purple — *Passion and power!*
- Blue — *Blessing and belting out the blues!*
- Green — *Gleaning and gleaming!*
- Gold — *Gratitude and glory!*

Format

Every month we have a God-given theme delving into different aspects and areas of faith. Over the course of 2024 these themes connect and take us on a faith journey out into the wonders of life with Jesus. Our themes shape our Daily Worship, Sunday Live streams and all sorts of other creative things we get up to! Each week runs Sunday - Saturday and each has a series of daily Bible readings and prompts for reflection.

Purple — *Passion and power!* (Week 1, 1 December)

Introduction: We begin our journey through the brightness of Christmas with Royal Purple as Joseph is given a sneak peak of the King of Kings that his fiancée is going to give birth to. But this Jesus is no ordinary king as he combines the purple of royalty with the purple of the priesthood. This unique combination will birth an incredible saviour, but for him to make it Joseph must be stirred to compassion. Both the priesthood and royalty have long been associated with purple and in Jesus these two shades come together in selfless prince of peace who leads us to the throne of God. Our expectations about power and authority are turned on their head and reinvented. This Prince of Peace was born in a stable, the son of a father who almost disowned him and yet he was the most powerful person on earth. This week we want to think about how we can turn expectations of power on their head and be stirred by compassion to empower others. Are children born into difficult fragile circumstances simply regrettable victims of wider forces or are they powerful agents of change and transformation themselves? The nativity tells us it's the latter! Our call to action this week is to join with Compassion and other organisation like them to consider how we can empower children born into poverty today to be all they can be — bright precious individuals ready to shine!

Setting the scene: Purple Christmas light shining in a tree.

Seeds to sow: This week consider how you can support organisations like Compassion that are empowering young people born into poverty around the world.

- 1. Matthew 1: 18-19 Precarious prince of peace** Jesus was not born into a wealthy noble family, in fact his position is precarious. Mary like many mothers around the world today is in a hugely vulnerable position.
- 2. Matthew 1: 20-21 God stirs compassion in Joseph.** Where is the purple light of God King and Priest spurring on our dreams — urging us to compassion! Who are the people who need to be remembered, protected, to belong, to be given a chance?
- 3. Matthew 1: 22-23 Immanuel, God with us.** Emmanuel, God with us, King of kings. This King is not born of pomp and ceremony but out of the strength and compassion of Joseph and Mary. God and humanity together, a bright beacon that shines through history.
- 4. Matthew 1: 24-25 Joseph stands by Mary and Jesus.** For Mary and Joseph life is never going to be the same again. For the world, things are never going to be the same again. Jesus's heart for the vulnerable, the oppressed, the widow and orphan is grounded in an experience of being born into precarious and uncertain circumstances himself.
- 5. Isaiah 9: 6-7 Prophesied Prince of Peace!** Our Prince of Peace is a seemingly impossible thing — a selfless ruler, one who leads from the heart, blending the purple of royalty with the purple of the priesthood. Through Jesus we come to God the Father. Christianity upends how we think about power. A carpenter's son born on the margins who speaks simply and powerfully about love is the most powerful person on the planet. This is a bright spark of selfless leadership!
- 6. Genesis 14: 18–20 Who is Melchizedek!?** This blending of King and Priest (and offering a meal, bread and wine) is a foreshadowing deep in the Old Testament of the figure of Jesus to come.

7. **Hebrews 6: 17-20** **A high priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek.** All of us, no matter the circumstances we come from, have a sure and certain hope in Jesus — our forerunner, a high priest on our behalf linking God and Humanity. All of us are worthy of love, dignity, respect and a chance to shine — so let's follow after Christ and help him to give all the chance to shine.

Blue — *Blessing and belting out the blues!* (Week 2, 8 December)

Introduction: The next bright colour in our All is Bright series is blue — a colour often associated with Mary in artistic depictions of the nativity. Historically there are a number of reasons for this, but some of it stems from the fact that blue is a notoriously difficult and expensive pigment to use and as result often was associated with the transcendent and divine and reserved for special subjects. One consequence of this is the bright visual legacy of 'Marian blue'. But what about Mary's audio legacy, in the *blues*! Riffing on Hannah's protest song in the Old Testament, this week we join Mary visiting Elizabeth and her powerful song of social justice, the Magnificat. There is a bright light throughout history of those who stand up for and sing with one another, banding together against injustice. In the darkness of modern day poverty there is the brightness of solidarity, support and kindness, when we link arm in arm.

Setting the scene: Blue Christmas light shining in a tree.

Seeds to sow: This week consider how you can support organisations like Christians Against Poverty (CAP) that work to end poverty and give people hope.

1. **Luke 1: 39-45 Mary visits Elizabeth.** Getting that support and encouragement must have been enormous for the young Mary who has just been thrown for a loop by the Angel Gabriel!
2. **1 Samuel 1: 24-28 Hannah visits the Temple.** Before Mary plugs her guitar into the amplifier, let's rewind the tape to the Old Testament and Hannah, who also belted out the blues.
3. **1 Samuel 2: 1-5 Hannah's Song Part 1** The power of song to tell us about God.
4. **Luke 1: 46-51 Mary's Song Part 1** The power of song to tell us about God.
5. **1 Samuel 2: 6-10 Hannah's Song Part 2** The Old Testament against poverty!
6. **Luke 1: 52-55 Mary's Song Part 2.** The New Testament against poverty!
7. **Luke 1: 56 Three months.** And finally, a quick verse and easy to skip, but think about these three months and what the guidance, support and friendship of Elizabeth would have meant to Mary. What other songs might they have sung together? Perhaps we can even picture Elizabeth and Mary making blue blankets for each other's sons — a bright light of friendship.

Green — *Gleaning and gleaming!* (Week 3, 15 December)

Introduction: Are you dreaming of a green Christmas? Joseph's dreamt, Mary's sung, and now they are out on the road through God's green world displaced and heavily pregnant! As we think about our wide green world and the populations that are still being displaced upon it we want to find the bright lights shining for climate justice, global equality and mutual sustainable thriving! Do we want a materialistic Christmas destined for Boxing Day landfill, or do we want to be drawn into the brightness of a green, evergreen Christmas that shines bright for our whole world?

Setting the scene: Green Christmas light shining in a tree.

Seeds to sow: This week consider how you can support organisations like Tearfund who tackle poverty and injustice and champion sustainable development.

- 1. Luke 2: 1 *In those days and these days...*** Empires make decrees and lives are thrown into chaos. It happened then. It happens now.
- 2. Luke 2: 2 *The imperial apparatus...*** It's intriguing in this story of divine power that we see the hierarchical infrastructure of the empire, the chain of command. Our king, our new ruler, is about to be born in a lowly stable without any staff or advisers let alone an army of bureaucrats and actual soldiers. In the nativity the empire is the sideshow — the real event is happening with some bright lights in a wee stable.
- 3. Luke 2: 3 *On the move...*** We live in a world full of displaced people who are shunted back and forth over borders. What is our prayer today for them? What is our prayer of brightness in the darkness? What is our prayer for evergreen solutions?
- 4. Luke 2: 4 *A storm of history and politics.*** Just like weather and geography, our lives are shaped by politics and history. But our politics and history go further in that they also shape our weather and geography as the consequences of disrupted ecosystems is a strain on our climate, economies and societies. Our big bright green world is a beautiful place one that needs our help to stay evergreen.
- 5. Luke 2: 5 *Remembering the Mary and Josephs of today.*** Even in the midst of upheaval and turmoil, tenacious life has a way of spurring us on to hope. Our evergreen Christ imbues in us a hope that is stronger than all the world can throw at us. Let's remember the bright lights of hope that all little families, all throughout the world carry with them, facing each new day.
- 6. Leviticus 19: 9-10 *21st Century Gleaning?*** How can we leave spaces for others to glean in the 21st century? Globally and locally. This might be agricultural but also there might be other resources we have that should be more porous and inclusive.
- 7. Leviticus 19: 33-24 *Time to be green and glean and gleam!*** Human beings are bright precious things! How can we recognise the brightness and preciousness of the human beings around us who have come from far.

Gold — *Gratitude and glory!* (Week 4, 22 December)

Introduction: Royal Purple of the Prince of Peace, Marian Blue of our Blues singing Mary and the bright green of this precious world and now we look up to brightness of Gold! The bright raiment of angels singing to the shepherds in the fields. And we think too of the golden treasure in Mary's heart as she ponders all these things.

Setting the scene: Gold Christmas light shining in a tree.

Seeds to sow: This week consider how you can support organisations like the Bethany Trust who work to relieve the suffering and meet the long term needs of homeless and vulnerable people in Scotland.

- 1. Psalm 82 *Real, genuine value.*** What's precious to us and what's precious to God? The brightness of a human face, long accustomed to pain and loneliness cracking into a smile is brighter than any wrapping paper, or cheap bauble... and yet it can be easier to focus on getting the right paper, and the perfect bauble, and easy to forget the faces we rush past. Guide us to true brightness God!
- 2. Zechariah 7: 8-10 *The widow and orphan.*** What to get God a Christmas gift? Here's his list.
- 3. Luke 2: 6-7 *Tonight's the golden night!*** (Christmas Eve). This is it, before 'all is calm, all is bright', all was probably noisy, confusing and painful. And then the miracle and the exhausted calm, the tender brightness, Emanuel, God with us.
- 4. Luke 2: 8-12 *A golden sign!*** (Christmas Day). Who gets to see this golden sign to be the first to catch on? Well, the local bigwigs are snoring in their feather beds and it's a group of humble shepherds, on the margins of the society round about them who get the honour. Because this Prince of Peace aint like any noble you've ever come across before.
- 5. Luke 2: 13-14 *Golden glory!*** All is bright, all is very, very bright, as angels meet shepherds, heaven meets earth, eternity meets the present — and all on a little hillside to a very small select audience. This is the gold of heaven that does not perish, not the shiny metallic ring of crowns and coins that will simply rust.
- 6. Luke 2: 15-18 *Golden moment.*** This is a kingdom from the ground up, the edges in. The Angel Gabriel didn't sign up influencers to get Jesus on the agenda. It was beautiful ordinary people in their bright beautiful ordinary golden lives that shared their story, our story.
- 7. Luke 2: 19-20 *Golden memories to treasure.*** What are the golden memories that Mary treasured that first Christmas? And what are the bright golden memories we want to make this Christmas season? Memories of surprise and generosity, compassion and wonder that we can treasure for years to come?