

Jesus, Advent and Lifted...

3/12/17

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

I have not been known for my outstanding singing voice. In fact, whilst still a teenager, my father, a guitarist in his day, said that unfortunately it would seem that I was tone deaf and therefore I would find it very difficult to learn to play the guitar and sing simultaneously... this was confirmed a few years ago when the Titular Organist of my previous parish, whilst training me to chant the traditional liturgy, suggested that I might have a “lazy ear”!

However, that being said, like all of you I am sure, I do enjoy listening to my music of choice. Whilst I have many favourites that come to mind like Dire Straits, the Bee Gees and even Vivaldi (I realise I am showing my age here), there is one album that has stood out for me for close on twenty years. Ever since I heard the song for the first time on the radio, it has remained part of my life ever since.

This song is entitled “Lifted”. It was written by British duo Lighthouse Family in 1995, for their debut album *Ocean Drive* that was released in 1996. The song was written by Paul Tucker, Tunde Baiyewu and Martin Brammer. The song was produced by Mike Peden. Interestingly, this song was used as the official campaign song for the British Labour Party under Tony Blair in the 2001 general election in the UK.

I am going to play the song for you to listen to now.

Kindly unfold the sheet of paper in front of you and carefully follow the lyrics, whilst appreciating the melody and tone.

Lifted

I'd really love to be alone without all the
Ache and pain and the April showers
But it ain't long before I long for you, like a
Ray of hope, coming through the blue moon

When it all gets dark again
The whole thing falls apart I guess
It doesn't really matter 'bout the rain
'Cause we'll get through it anyway
We'll get up and start again

'Cause we could be lifted, lifted, lifted
We could be Lifted
From the shadows, lifted
Oh we could be, lifted up today
Lifted all the way, you and I forever
Baby, lifted, lifted, lifted, hey

It's undisturbable the peace we found
In a bright new space up above the clouds
Everything is understandable
You don't have to say anything too loud

When all our luck runs out again
We're brought back down to solid ground
I wouldn't say I'm mad about the rain
But we'll get through it anyway
We'll get back to the start again

'Cause we could be lifted, lifted, lifted
We could be lifted
From the shadows, lifted
Oh we could be, lifted up today
Lifted all the way, you and I forever
Baby, lifted, we could be lifted, we could be lifted, hey

We could be lifted, we could be lifted, we could be lifted
You and I forever
We could be lifted, we could be lifted, yeah we could be lifted
We could be lifted up to new horizons

Lifted, lifted up today, lifted all the way, yeah we could be lifted
We could be lifted, from the shadows, we could be lifted
Lifted up to new horizons
When it all gets dark again, it doesn't really matter 'bout the rain
When it all gets dark again, it doesn't really matter 'bout the rain

Today is the first Sunday in Advent.

What does that mean for us as Christians and why did we listen to a song entitled Lifted sung by the Lighthouse Family?

Many people understand the Advent season to be a focus on the expectation and anticipation of the birth of Christ. This is true but there is also a lot more to Advent than we realise.

The tradition dates to the mid-19th century when German Protestants made chalk marks on doors or lit candles to count the days leading up to Christmas. A gentleman by the name of Gerhard Lang is widely believed to have printed the first Advent Calendar in the early 1900s.

From an exegetical point of view, the word “Advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus* which translates to “coming”. This, in turn, was a translation from the Greek word, *parousia*.

Today the season of Advent lasts for four Sunday’s leading up to Christmas. This is a time of joy and celebration as we await the Light of our life to be born unto us. We look towards the birth of Jesus as a new start, a new life, a new beginning, not only for the church, but also for us as spiritual beings filled with the love of Jesus in a world that is often dark, oppressive and suppressive of our spiritual freedom, humanity and happiness.

Some of you may indeed be wondering why I took the time to share the song entitled “Lifted” with you today. In a way, the words of this beautiful song allude to our feelings of being lifted up towards the light of God, as we await

the birth of Jesus. We are essentially lifted into the love of God through and by the Holy Spirit, as we prepare ourselves for the birth of our King.

You see, the song Lifted uses the metaphor of being lifted from the shadows... this could mean different things for different people sitting here this morning. Perhaps your shadow is struggling with depression, or feeling lonely, addiction to drugs or even social media... we all have a shadow in our life at some stage, where we struggle with the ups and downs of life. The Lighthouse Family and their wording in the song Lifted, reminds us as Christians that when a shadow does cast itself over our life, we can be lifted out of that shadow towards the light of Christ and His love. Furthermore, once lifted out of our shadow of darkness, we can find that special peace in Jesus, the peace that He promised the world. Jesus becomes the solid ground that we can build the foundations of our lives upon... the rock: solid, dependable and firm. The love of Jesus is forever... we only need to allow ourselves to be lifted up towards the light and love of Jesus... for He does love us, every day.

So my dear friends, as we begin this Advent together let us for a moment consider the following:

- 1) Let us, both corporately and alone, spend some time in prayer reflecting on the year that has passed. Let us be thankful for all that we have and the numerous blessings that we have all received.
- 2) Let us, also, be aware of our struggles and suffering that we have endured over the past year. These have been the times of the shadow in our life where we have had to work very hard at growing through these experiences and keeping close to Jesus, no matter how hard or difficult it has been for us.
- 3) Let us be lifted towards the Light of Jesus as look forward this Advent to celebrating the birth of Jesus on the 25th of December. By allowing ourselves to be lifted towards the light and love of Jesus, we can move out of the shadows in our life, we can move forward and grow anew in the Holy Spirit.
- 4) Lastly, let us lift one another up too. We can lift one another up in prayer, but we can also physically lift one another up by becoming involved in the daily life of our church and the community we live in. By lifting others up, in whatever ministry or gift we are blessed with, we are

making a difference and that is what Jesus is all about: Making a difference in the world.

Let us as a family make this Advent a memorable one this year, as we consciously lift ourselves up to the light and love of Jesus in everything that we say and do.

I am reminded of the beautiful words of the well known Advent hymn that perfectly represents the church's cry during the Advent season:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,

And ransom captive Israel,

That mourns in lonely exile here

Until the Son of God appears.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

And in the words of the Lighthouse Family...

We could be Lifted

From the shadows, lifted

Oh we could be, lifted up today

Lifted all the way, you and I forever...

Are you ready and happy to be lifted out of your shadow towards the light and love of Jesus this Advent?

May God bless you this week ahead as we quietly celebrate the beginning of Advent in eager anticipation of the birth of our King.

Amen.