

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 28th November 2021

Advent Sunday

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (*adventus*) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time.

As we light the first Advent Candle, let us pray:

People of God: awake! The day is coming soon when you shall see God face to face.

Remember the ways and the works of God. God calls you out of darkness to walk in the light of his coming. You are God's children. **Lord, make us one as we walk with Christ today and forever. Amen.**

First hymn: O come, O come, Emmanuel

1 O come, O come Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

2 O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice! ...

3 O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! ...

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. *Psalm 25. 4,5*

Invitation to Confession

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore, in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

Turn to us again, O God our Saviour, and let your anger cease from us:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Show us your compassion, O Lord, and grant us your salvation:
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Your salvation is near for those that fear you, that glory may dwell in your land:
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Advent Sunday Collect

Let us pray: **Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

4 O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! ...

5 O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.

Rejoice! Rejoice! ...

Latin 13th century translated by John M Neale (1818-1866) (Public Domain)

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-end

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Second hymn: Light of the world

1 Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you
Hope of a life spent with you

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

So here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
And I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross

2 King of all days
Oh so highly exalted
Glorious in heaven above
Humbly you came to the earth you created
All for love's sake became poor

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

Chris Tomlin CCLI Licence 2370586

Gospel Reading: Luke 21:25-36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Reflection

What are you waiting for right now? What are your hopes and dreams at present - for yourself, your family, your church, for after death? Our lives are full of hopes: worldly, natural hopes, important and trivial. The incessant pace and demand of life, especially through electronic media makes us increasingly impatient and intolerant of having to

wait. I openly admit it, I am not happy if my computer screen or smartphone does not instantly spring into life on demand! We are not really used to waiting these days!

Advent is all about watching and waiting for the coming of God to complete his work, but doing so in activity and hope. On this ADVENT SUNDAY we who are Christian disciples are reminded by our bible readings that, though the world seems bleak and broken at times; decision making at COP26 and why on earth would someone want to bomb up that hospital in Liverpool? Both recent examples ... these readings remind us that God is going to complete the job he started in Bethlehem on that first Christmas, and continued in Jesus' loving death and mighty resurrection at Easter. Advent is about the sure and certain hope that God will finish what he has started, that justice and right will triumph in the end and that he wants us to be part of bringing that future about.

People in some other parts of the world hope for no more war, that there will be food and clean water tomorrow, that they simply get safely to the end of the day. Maybe you too feel trapped, by the pandemic, or for whatever reason, maybe you can't be bothered to hope, or worse – maybe all your hope is gone: it has been pressed out of you by things going on in your life.

Advent Sunday calls us back to our hopes and dreams in Jesus Christ. In our Gospel today, in the context of a parable about always being alert, Jesus says: "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with ... the worries of this life". Are we complacent in our spiritual waiting, or active in pushing forward the boundaries of the Kingdom of God as his disciples?

So here we are on Advent Sunday 2021 called to renew our hope in the God who still comes to us now, every minute, every moment, calling us to watch and wait and join in with his work in the world. Waiting in Advent hope is not about inertia and leaving it all to God. The famous evangelist David Watson once said that God the Holy Spirit works more often in our activity than our inactivity.

Later this week, on 30th November it will be St Andrew's Day, the day on which we celebrate that lesser known apostle. Andrew was not one to hang around inactively. He was always bringing people to Jesus: his brother Peter, the boy with the loaves and fishes, the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus... He didn't just sit there and wait! He watched, waited ... and responded to Godly opportunities.

Advent is a wake-up call to the Church to watch and pray, but not to stop there, rather to see what God is doing and join in.

There is no 'settling' in the Christian life. We are not called to be sleepily religious, cosy in our faith, but to be faithful and adventurous for and with Jesus. Always remember that God has double vision for you: he sees you as you are and also as you can or should be in Jesus. The challenge of Advent is to live an authentic Christian life:

People outside watch you come to church, they follow what goes on in your life, they are interested in how you respond.

You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day, by the deeds that you do, and the things that you say. Others read what you write, be it faithful or true, so, just what is the Gospel, according to you?

As Christians in this universe we have the absolute right to be total and eternal optimists. There is no such thing as a hopeless Christian. It is a contradiction in terms. The 19th Century Russian writer Feodor Dostoyevsky, who knew enough about worldly hopelessness, through prison, a death sentence for his literary interests and being so poor at one stage that he had to beg for his food, wrote this: "**Others see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope!**"

What are you waiting for? What is your hope for this Christmas 2021 and beyond? Dare to dream God's dream for the rest of your life! Amen.

Prayers

Eternal Father, we thank you for this Advent season of hope and expectation. We thank you that, even in these dark days of approaching winter, we can celebrate the coming of light. O Lord of light and truth: **Shine in our darkness.**

We thank you for the life of Jesus Christ and the light of goodness which he brought into the world. We thank you that his light has inspired prophets and saints in every generation to overcome the darkness of hate, fear, greed, lust and callous indifference with the radiance of love, faith, generosity, kindness and compassion. May that same radiance enlighten this present age. We pray for children, abused and neglected, for refugees fleeing from persecution, for ethnic minorities who are victims of racism, for bitter, damaged people seeking dangerous refuge in drugs, alcohol or violence against others. O Lord of light and truth: **Shine in our darkness.**

We thank you for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which gives hope of the coming of your Kingdom. Give the light of hope to those who live in the darkness of conflict, poverty and oppression. Give the light of hope to those who labour for

peace, justice and human dignity. We pray for those who seek reconciliation, those who work for peace and all those who give their services to the hungry, homeless and deprived in cities and villages across the world.

O Lord of light and truth: **Shine in our darkness.**

We thank you for the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which shines wherever there is compassion, forgiveness and healing. Holy Spirit, shine even in our lives, to bring comfort to those who mourn, release to those who are burdened with anxiety or guilt, friendship to those who are lonely, strength to the sick and peace to those who live in fear. We pray especially for those known to us in this moment of silence ... O Lord of light and truth: **Shine in our darkness.**

Lord, give us grace in this Advent season to cast aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

Final hymn: Hills of the North, rejoice

Hills of the North, rejoice,
echoing songs arise,
hail with united voice
him who made earth and skies;
he comes in righteousness and love,
he brings salvation from above.

4 Shores of the utmost West,
lands of the setting sun,
welcome the heavenly guest
in whom the dawn has come:
he brings a never-ending light
who triumphed o'er our darkest night.

2 Isles of the Southern seas,
sing to the listening earth,
carry on every breeze
hope of a world's new birth:
in Christ shall all be made anew,
his word is sure, his promise true.

5 Shout, as you journey on,
songs be in every mouth,
lo, from the North they come,
from East and West and South:
in Jesus all shall find their rest,
in him the sons of earth be blest.

3 Lands of the East, arise,
he is your brightest morn,
greet him with joyous eyes,
praise shall his path adorn:
the God whom you have longed to know
in Christ draws near, and calls you now.

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Final Prayer and Blessing:

May God the Father, who loved the world so much that he sent his only Son,
give you grace to prepare for eternal life. **Amen.**

May God the Son, who comes to us as redeemer and judge,
reveal to you the path from darkness to light. **Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit, by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived Christ,
help you bear the fruits of holiness. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among you and all whom you love and pray for,
now and forevermore. **Amen.**

Sources: *Times and Seasons* copyright @The Archbishop's Council 2006, *New Patterns for Worship* copyright @The Archbishop's Council 2008 and *Prayers adapted from Isaiah 9.2* by Peter Dainty in *the Electric Bible* 2005