

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 28th November 2021

Advent Sunday Worship

Hello, I hope you are well. This Advent Sunday, we will hear from Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25:1-10 and Luke 21:25-36. Throughout Advent, we will light candles in church, and I will include liturgy each week for any who are worshipping at home and wish to light a candle for worship. Let us worship God together:

Call to worship

To be alive is sometimes to experience pain and difficulties.
 Jesus warns us not to overreact to disaster,
 but to try to see life from a wider perspective,
 looking for the coming of the kingdom of God.
 There is always hope: God will not forsake us.
 Come, let us worship.

A gathering prayer

We pray as we light our first candle this week.

As we light this Advent candle,
 may its flame be for us a sign of hope;
 may its warmth be a symbol of God's love for us;
 and may it inspire us to be hope bearers –
 people of compassion and integrity,
 as we gather in the name of Jesus
 who is the light of the world. **Amen.**

A prayer of approach

God of mystery,
 we have stepped into Advent and await your revelations.
 We have stepped into Advent, hoping that we and others
 will see and feel and know your message.
 You are a patient, persevering God, who offers your all for us;
 you offer to us the depth of your being, the essence of life, the gift of love beyond compare.
 And we wait to celebrate again the gift of Jesus born for us, given for us.
 We look to you, for you will show us true life bursting forth. **Amen.**

R&S 656 Lo! He comes with clouds descending,

1 Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
 once for favoured sinners slain;
 thousand thousand saints attending
 swell the triumph of his train:
 Alleluia! (3 times)
 God appears on earth to reign.

2 Every eye shall now behold him
 robed in awesome majesty;
 we, who set at naught and sold him,
 crucified him on the tree:
 Lord, have mercy, (3 times)
 let us all thine Advent see.

3 Those dear tokens of his passion
 still his dazzling body bears,
 cause of endless exultation
 to his ransomed worshippers:
 Sing hosanna! (3 times)
 see the risen Lord appears!

4 Yea, Amen, let all adore thee,
 high on thine eternal throne:
 Saviour, take the power and glory,
 claim the kingdom for thine own;
 O come quickly, (3 times)
 Alleluia! Come, Lord, come!

A prayer with our children before they go to Junior Church to make their Christingles

A prayer of adoration

Eternal God, hope of the world,
 we cannot grasp the immensity of your being,
 and yet all around us we catch glimpses of your power.
 You speak to us in nature's blessings.
 You speak to us through science and creativity.
 You reveal yourself in the love and the care
 and the support of those around us.
 You show yourself when we most need to see you.
 When we least expect it, we see your hand at work.
 We read your Word, time and time again,
 and suddenly, we are amazed by seeing something new.
 Eternal God, we adore you. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession

We wait, but don't always find it easy to wait,
 and for that we are sorry.
 We confess our impatience and our lack of attention
 to the journey and its signposts.
 Teach us that preparation is part of the journey
 and that the journey is part of the gift.
 You offer us a way to follow, a path to tread,
 a journey that leads to hope, to joy, to trust and to love,
 and we confess we do not always follow.
 Now, may we step into this Advent as faithful people,
 seeking forgiveness and trying to follow your path,
 and believing you will be walking with us every step of the way. **Amen.**

Assurance of forgiveness

God promises to all who follow,
 that he will take away our sins
 and set us on the path to life eternal.
 Hear God's word, know God's forgiveness,
 and feel God's peace. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 to you we bring our thanks and praise
 for your promises through the ages,
 for your first Word,
 for the first utterance of Wisdom,
 for the first indwelling of the Spirit,
 for the first sensing of divinity,
 for the first utterance of the prophets,
 for the dreams of the dreamers,
 for the visions of the visionaries,
 for the stories of the storytellers,
 for the journeys of the travellers,
 for the obedience of the called.
 God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 to you we bring our thanks and praise. **Amen.**

R&S 137 Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes

1 Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long:
let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.

2 He comes, the prisoners to release
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.

3 He comes, from ignorance and doubt
to clear the inward sight;
and on the darkness of the blind
to pour celestial light.

4 He comes, the broken heart to bind,
the wounded soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to enrich the humble poor.

5 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
thy welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring
with thy beloved name.

Philip Doddridge (1702-51) altd.*

OT Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16*The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David*

¹⁴The 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. ¹⁵In 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. ¹⁶In 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.

Psalm Reading Psalm 25:1-10*Prayer for Guidance and for Deliverance
Of David.*

- ¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
²O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
³Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
⁴Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.
⁵Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
⁶Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!
⁸Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
⁹He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
¹⁰All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

Gospel Reading Luke 21:26-36

The Coming of the Son of Man

²⁵ '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. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in a cloud" with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

²⁹ Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'

Exhortation to Watch

³⁴ '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, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ 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

Our Gospel reading today is set in Holy Week, a day or two before the arrest of Jesus. Jesus had caused uproar in the Temple and spoken to the crowds. Both sets of religious leaders, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, had tried to trap Jesus in arguments. And really, at first glance this passage can seem full of overwhelming, threatening images. However, if we keep reading, we see the signs of hope: the buds on the tree proclaiming summer is on the way, the signs of God's kingdom and the encouragement to '*raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near*'.

Luke 21 is Luke's 'little apocalypse' and it is actually based on the collection of Jesus' apocalyptic sayings in Mark 13, some of which we considered a couple of weeks ago, although he uses Mark's material in a very different way. Both Matthew and Mark give the impression that the glorious coming of the Son of Man will occur soon after the traumatic fall of Jerusalem (Matt 24:29, Mark 13:24), but Luke makes room for the Church's mission by separating the two events. In all three accounts, there is a vision of the unravelling of creation, as if the sequence of the creation story in Genesis 1 is being put into reverse gear. What Jesus envisages here is much more catastrophic than any natural disaster: the end of the world as people know it, though not the end of everything.

In Luke 21:27, we notice that the NRSV translation puts the '*Son of Man coming in a cloud*' in quotation marks, as the connection is made with Daniel 7:9-14 (we read this last week) and with its hope-filled vision that God would vindicate those who kept faith with him during the persecutions of Antiochus IV. The Son of Man's direction of travel could be 'to God', as in Daniel and possibly Mark 13:26, or 'from God', as in Matthew 24:30. Whichever perspective is considered, the reference to Daniel endorses Jesus' warnings in the little apocalypse and in his ministry as a whole. For Luke, Jesus' own vindication, in his resurrection from the dead, and his mysterious yet glorious '*coming in a cloud*' is his way of showing us that Jesus is not just some prophet of doom! Rather, in a collapsing world, Jesus remains as a completely trustworthy guide: ³³ *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away* (Luke 21:33).

We note the obvious contrast presented in this passage between two ways of living. One way is that of a downward cycle of worry, drunkenness, with a blinkered day-to-day existence. The alternative is to live an alert and watchful life, lived with the head up and the heart filled with hope and trust in God. The urgency of the phrase '*this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place*' (21:32) reveals to us that all were expecting the day of the Son of Man soon, and Luke (writing already nearly a generation away from the fall of Jerusalem) records this without any sense of embarrassment. For ourselves today, surely we will hear in these words a clear reminder that we are to remain firmly committed to being prepared. We begin Advent with this reminder that, as one commentator suggests 'the purposes of God do not always unfold

gradually. There are sudden 'hinge moments' in God's activity when world history changes for ever. Not all times are the same; there are appointed times for judgement and salvation. While the prospect of all the communities on earth experiencing disruption is frightening, Luke encourages us to be assured that our redemption is drawing near.' We all know that sometimes it can be hard to see the joy that awaits, the joy that will come, in time. This can be a really tough place to live. But, as another writer observes, 'even in the most hostile of environments, there are signs of life. Indeed, life often needs a tough start in order to grow, for example, a hard winter or a forest fire.' Perhaps it is the same for us too. Perhaps in tough times, we need to look for those little signs of hope. Perhaps in tough times, we need to *be* those little signs of hope. While we look expectantly for the coming of God's kingdom, let us look also for how we might be God's chosen answer to our own Advent hopes and prayers, and bring something of God's love, mercy and justice into our world today. Amen.

A moment for reflection as we listen to some music

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, on you the past and the future hinge.
 You open the door to past wisdom and to future knowledge.
 You are the kingdom among us and the kingdom yet to come.
 May this Advent be as a new beginning in our walk of faith.
 And, inspired by all those who have gone before us,
 may our steps be bold, faithful, loving and just.
 We ask this in your name. **Amen.**

BPW 149 There's a light upon the mountains

1 There's a light upon the mountains,
 and the day is at the spring,
 when our eyes shall see the beauty
 and the glory of the King;
 weary was our heart with waiting,
 and the night-watch seemed so long,
 but His triumph-day is breaking,
 and we hail it with a song.

2 There's a hush of expectation,
 and a quiet in the air;
 and the breath of God is moving
 in the fervent breath of prayer;
 for the suffering, dying Jesus
 is the Christ upon the throne,
 and the travail of our spirits
 is the travail of His own.

3 He is breaking down the barriers,
 He is casting up the way;
 He is calling for His angels
 to build up the gates of day;
 but His angels here are human,
 not the shining hosts above,
 For the drum-beats of His army
 are the heart-beats of our love.

4 Hark! we hear a distant music,
 and it comes with fuller swell;
 it's the triumph song of Jesus,
 of our King Immanuel;
 Zion, go ye forth to meet Him,
 and my soul, be swift to bring
 all thy sweetest and thy dearest
 for the triumph of our King.

Henry Burton (1840-1930)

Our prayers of intercession

Your voice sings through creation,
 from the dawning of light to the end of time.
 You are our beginning and our end
 and our days are held in the palm of your hand.
 O God, you are the beginning and end of all things, we pray to you:
 for those who nurture new life both physical and spiritual;
 for teachers and leaders and those who have inspired our faith;
 for midwives and prophets;
 for the people who call us to start again;

for all who are at the beginning of a new adventure of faith,
 and for all who feel that it is time to lay down some responsibilities;
 for children growing up in challenging times;
 for those we know who are approaching the end of their life;
 and for all who watch at the bedside of the sick.

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Your voice sings through Scripture
 and through the words of the prophets,
 calling us back to your heart of love.
 and filling us with hope in your vision of a better world
 where justice and gentleness shape our lives.
 God our protector and provider, we pray to you:
 for trust in you when our world seems so troubled;
 for faithfulness to your work of life in your church;
 for a narrative of hope in society and in our leadership;
 for the courage to challenge the lies of exclusion and inequality;
 and for a new beginning.

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Your voice sings in the darkness
 where people are lost and alone;
 distant from home, sick or afraid.
 O God, you mend what is broken, we pray to you:
 for all refugees and asylum seekers;
 for a decent, humane and workable immigration system;
 for the collective will to face our responsibility for the conflict-torn areas of the world;
 for Ethiopia, as the Prime Minister escalates war against the rebels;
 for Afghanistan as winter begins to bite and food is in short supply;
 for support workers and volunteers working in rescue;
 and for all who are in danger today.

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Your voice sings in the witness of faithful people through the ages
 the ones who have stood on the edges,
 and those who have felt the pain of the excluded.
 God of challenge and love, we pray to you:
 for the marginalised;
 for those whose voices are silenced;
 for the observers of the times and the critics,
 and all who call our attention to the gap between the talk and the walk;
 for serious government that meets the challenges of the day with wisdom.

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Your voice sings in the desert, in the land which is dry and parched;
 in the hidden places where you are at work
 and in the quiet places that are full of unseen acts of kindness.
 God of peace and wholeness, we pray to you:
 for the chance encounters of the week ahead;
 for friends and family and the blessing they add to our lives;
 for everyone that has helped us through the past year;
 for people we love and care about;
 for the bereft and bereaved,
 for the sick and those struggling with their health
 and for those who watch over them.

A moment of quiet for our own prayers for those we love

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Your voice sings of a future as yet unknown.

You ask us for our trust,

and you point us to the power of our everyday choices.

God of time and space, we pray to you:

for greater commitment to preserving the resources of the planet;

for true love of neighbours near and far;

for lives that honour your justice and your truth;

for gentleness with ourselves and one another.

Give us the ability to wait patiently for you.

Give us hearts that stay faithful,

hands that are ready to reach out to others,

and lives that are shaped by your love.

Give us expectant hearts as we listen for your voice.

Wait for the Lord, his day is near.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Junior Church children will return towards the end of our service to show us their Christingles

R&S 265 I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,

1 I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon the human race,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, within the fold of grace.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary,
when Bethlehem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

2 I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three-and-thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,
for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.

3 I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour,
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.

4 I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when all the hearts of earth with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad, myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth, will answer:
'At last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King!'

William Y. Fullerton. (1857-1932)

A sending out prayer

Loving God,
as we end our time together and leave this place,
let us go in hope,
live by hope,
and be signs of hope for all to see.
In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

The Blessing

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
be upon us and those we love,
this day and always. **Amen.**

The Grace

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.**