



Heacham Parish Church



28th November 2021 – First Sunday of Advent

Welcome to Sunday Worship as we begin the season of Advent, a time when we reflect on what it is to make ourselves ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas and make ourselves ready for his second coming.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Lord be with you **and also with you.**

Hymn: Longing for light (Christ, be our light!)

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

*Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts,
shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Christ, be our light

Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

Christ, be our light

Longing for shelter, many are homeless,
longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

Christ, be our light

Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Christ, be our light

Prayer of preparation

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The lighting of the Advent Candle

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors:
to you be praise and glory for ever.
You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.
May we be obedient to your call
and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ,
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
for you are our light and our salvation.
Blessed be God for ever.

Prayers of Penitence

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:
The first commandment is this:
'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

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.

Confession

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against
you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness, through our own
deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us, forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.**

Amen.

Almighty God,

who forgives all who truly repent,

have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,

confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,

and keep us in life eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect

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 for ever. Amen

Bible reading – Luke 21:25-36 read by Amanda

A reflection – by John Whitbread

When I was a young boy, up to my late twenties and even later on in life, I was a scout, and their motto was "Be prepared." I was not sure exactly what to be prepared for, but I was ready, but for what?

Perhaps let us look at a more relevant person in our society namely a firemen or firewomen. They are ready for action, when the bells go down it is too late to get ready, it is time for action. From having their gear placed beside their engine, ready to jump into it, to having the hose and tools loaded properly, they make it a point to be ready. When the call comes in, their minds, their attitudes and their equipment have to be ready for whatever danger they might face. It is too late to see if they have all the tools and equipment now!

Today as we begin the season of Advent I want you to ask yourself this question. Am I ready? If Jesus should come today are your bags packed or do you have some loose ends that need to be tidied up?

But we are here getting ready for the birth of Jesus, having a mindset on who this person was to become. A picture of the baby born in a stable surround by shepherds, angels, and wise men. It was not an important event apart from Mary, Joseph, the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men, but would become a major

event later in Jesus' life, His death and resurrection. But here we are looking forward to Jesus' return when from the heaven He will appear to come out of a cloud with power and great glory.

I think that if Jesus is telling us anything He is telling us to be ready. When you get home read early on in this chapter as well as our reading for today Luke 21:25-36. To get a better idea.

People in Jesus' time were fearful and worried about the uncertainty of things that were going on. The truth is the scripture for today sounds like it could have come from this week's news headlines. World leaders aren't in agreement about anything, people don't feel safe in their own communities and towns, people worry about the safety of their children even when they are at school or in public places.

In our world today we have riots, demonstrations, no respect for the laws, and even shootings. Added to this there are natural disasters happening like we have never seen them before. In our fast stressful way of life people worry, what if it goes wrong, how will it affect me and my family?

Jesus is asking us today what if... What if I come back are you ready? Have you prepared? I've already given the warning and sounded the alarm be ready. Jesus says that when these perilous times are upon us that we should stand up, and lift up our heads, because our redemption is drawing near.

Jesus uses a simple example of a fig tree or any tree coming into leaf - we know that summer is close when the daffodils start to bloom. When we see that these things are happening that, Jesus has told us, would be signs of the end times. Christians should know that the Kingdom of God is near, that Jesus is on the way and that we need to be ready.

You would think that we as Christians would see the writing on the wall unfortunately we fail to see the signs or fail to take them in. It's just like Christmas Day when we celebrate the birth of Christ,

when Christmas comes some people aren't ready, they are still shopping and preparing for Christmas Day on December 24th. You know what's even worse they will say, "Wow Christmas snuck up on me this year." I have a surprise for you, a real revelation that Christmas Day is on the 25th every year, it does not creep up. It's not a surprise, we sometimes fail to be ready. There will be a lot of people trying to pack their bags trying to get the last final push of clothes into a holdall when it is too late. The people will say to the Lord "I thought I had more time, why didn't you give me a call and let me know you were on the way?"

Jesus had shown the way, He is coming back. He had been unfolding and continues to unfold His plan, the signs are as clear as the leaves on the trees in springtime. Be ready, Jesus left us without fear and uncertainty, The Message Bible in Luke 34-36: sum it up really well.

"But be on your guard. Don't let the sharp edge of your expectation get dulled by parties and drinking and shopping. Otherwise, that Day is going to take you by complete surprise, spring on you suddenly like a trap, for it's going to come on everyone, everywhere, at once. So, whatever you do, don't go to sleep at the switch. Pray constantly that you will have the strength and wits to make it through everything that's coming and end up on your feet before the Son of Man."

Jesus says Be Ready.

I was told of a story of a mother who was trying to explain to her little girl, the death of her grandmother. The mother said, "God has sent for Nana and one day will send for us too, but we don't know when that will be." Satisfied with this the girl went away. The girl did not appear for some time and the mother went to find her. She found the little girl in her room packing her suitcase and she asked what she was doing. The girl replied, "If we know that God is going to send for us I thought we had best to pack so that we be ready."

I wonder what you will be doing this week or this month, will you still be wondering what to buy for Christmas, or what food and drink to have ready or will you be spending more time watching and praying.

How will you live Ready, so you don't have to get Ready, are your bags packed? Are You Ready?
Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

Hymn: Come, Thou long-expected Jesus

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
born to set Thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us;
let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth Thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver;
born a child, and yet a King;
born to reign in us for ever;
now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit
rule in all our hearts alone:
by Thine all-sufficient merit
raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Prayers of Intercession - Led by Veronica Welham

At the start of this new church year bless us Lord, as we prepare ourselves afresh for your coming. We offer you our hearts and our souls that your Holy Spirit may fill us with your grace, and with renewed wonder at the events of the Christmas story.

At the start of this new church year we humbly thank you Father, for your goodness to the church here throughout the past year. We began in January with holes in the tower and we thank you for touching the hearts of all those who responded so generously to that appeal. We thank you Lord for giving us your courage through the summer and autumn as you equipped people to cover the various aspects of Veronica's work during her leave, and we praise you that she is beginning to resume leading us again.

We thank you Lord for all those involved in yesterday's Christmas Fayre: for those planning and working behind the scenes; for the bakers and the catering team; for the stallholders; for the wonderful skills of all those producing crafts; and for everyone who came to support the event, despite the weather. We give you the glory Lord for all its success and for all that was offered and received.

We ask Lord for your blessing as we embrace the use of new technology to provide access to worship for those unable to attend services and to reach those who need to find you.

We pray Lord that you will give us the strength and purpose go forward with plans for the restoration of the cupola and bells next year; that the wider community will again want to support this. We marvel Lord, at the heritage you have placed in our care, and we pray that we are worthy of your trust in us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the words of Mother Teresa, 'I can do things you cannot; you can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things.'
At the start of this new church year, we praise you Lord for the skills, talents, and gifts of all who work to serve you in this place: for those leading worship, prayer, and Bible study; for our churchwarden; for the PCC; for our administrator; for the musicians, the technical team, the flower arrangers, the DIYers, the cleaners, the caterers, the gardeners.... We ask Lord that there will always be someone to do whatever needs doing. We pray Lord that our confidence in your strength will enable more to take on the necessary positions of responsibility. We trust Lord that you know who these are. We commit to you Lord the path ahead and pray that you will make us open to whatever you call us to do and to whatever change you call us to make.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

At the start of this new church year, we pray for our families Lord, whether they are close by or far away. We pray for their health and safety during the coming winter; guide and protect them Lord we

pray. We thank you Father that we have been able to have more contact with friends and family during the year and that it looks more certain that we can spend this Christmas season with those we love.

We pray for all the countries on the continent where the pandemic continues to rage with renewed intensity. We pray that more people will accept vaccinations to curb the spread and for the wisdom of governments to deal constructively with the situation.

We pray for our Queen as she faces her first Christmas as a widow. We ask Father that she will continue to know your strength, comfort, and patience as she faces on-going family issues and less robust health. We thank you for the example she sets through her worship and witness and her determination to serve you all her life.

We pray Father for all those in need: the hungry; the homeless; those in war-torn countries; the oppressed; the fearful; the distressed; the persecuted; and refugees, particularly for the families of those who drowned crossing the Channel this week. We feel so powerless in the face of so much need. We lay them at your feet Lord. Only you can restore what is needed in their lives and give them hope and a future.

We pray for those we know who need your healing and loving touch, and we name them before you now.....
And we pray for ourselves Lord. Thank you for the care that you give as our lives unfold day by day. Help us to be more aware of your presence with us. May your spirit guide us, empower us, encourage us, comfort us, and give us your joy and peace.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,
scatter the darkness from before your path,
and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Hymn: When the Lord in glory comes

When the Lord in glory comes,
not the trumpets, not the drums,
not the anthem, not the psalm,
not the thunder, not the calm,
not the shout the heavens raise,
not the chorus, not the praise
not the silences sublime,
not the sounds of space and time,
but His voice when He appears
shall be music to my ears;
 but His voice when He appears
 shall be music to my ears.

When the Lord is seen again,
not the glories of His reign,
not the lightnings through the storm,
not the radiance of His form,
not His pomp and power alone,
not the splendours of His throne,
not His robe and diadems,
not the gold and not the gems,
but His face upon my sight
shall be darkness into light;
 but His face upon my sight
 shall be darkness into light.

When the Lord to human eyes
shall bestride our narrow skies,
not the child of humble birth,
not the carpenter of earth,
not the man by all denied,
not the victim crucified,
but the God who died to save,
but the victor of the grave,
He it is to whom I fall,
Jesus Christ, my all-in-all;
 He it is to whom I fall,
 Jesus Christ, my all-in-all.

Dismissal

As we await our coming Saviour,
go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen

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