

Worship at Home Sunday 5 December 2021

Welcome to our Worship at Home for 5th December, the Second Sunday in Advent.

An **Advent Invitation to Worship.**

We give thanks that in the coming of Christ the day of our salvation dawned, for he came to judge the world with justice and the people by his faithfulness.

We wait for the Lord with longing, like those who watch for the morning.
For the Lord's love is unfailing and great is his power to save.

Our reading this morning is not from the Bible, but it is a poem by John Betjeman 'Advent 1955'.

The Advent wind begins to stir
with sea-like sounds in our Scotch fir.
It's dark at breakfast, dark at tea,
and in between we only see
clouds hurrying across the sky
and rain-wet roads the wind blows dry
and branches bending to the gale
against great skies all silver-pale.
The world seems travelling into space,
and travelling at a faster pace
than in the leisured summer weather
when we and friends sit out together.
For now we feel the world spin round
on some momentous journey bound .
Journey to what? to whom? to where?
The Advent bells call out 'Prepare,
your world is journeying to the birth
of God made man for us on earth'...

'The time draws near the birth of Christ' –
A present that cannot be priced
given two thousand years ago.
Yet if God had not given so,
He still would be a distant stranger
and not the baby in the manger.

The hymn is **Singing the Faith 188,**

'There's a light upon the mountains '.

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.

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 spirit
is the travail of His own.

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.

Hark! we hear a distant music,
and it comes with fuller swell;
'Tis the triumph song of Jesus,
of our King, Immanuel:
Zion, go ye forth to meet Him,
and my soul, be swift to bring
All your finest and your noblest for
the triumph of our King.

Reflection

As we were reminded in our invitation to worship, Advent is a time of waiting – waiting and expectation – but also while we wait, we can be presented with an opportunity to serve. I begin with an illustration...

Imagine a high class restaurant. All the tables are booked for the night, and the waiters are all there poised for action, ready to wait. The door is unlocked, and the guests pour in. They are greeted at the door by a waiter, who shows them to their table, hands them a menu, and leaves them for a time to make their choice, and, when they put the menu down, the waiter quickly appears, takes the order, and in due course serves the food. When the guests have finished and are getting their credit card out, the waiter quickly appears and takes payment, thanks the guests their custom and sends them on their way. They leave, having had a good experience. All have had expectations and have not been disappointed.

The expectations on the part of the guests and the waiters with their readiness to serve meant that all have had a good time. Waiting

in one way or another can give us all the opportunity to serve. .

So how are we approaching Christmas this Advent time? With expectations? Special food, family gatherings, a good carol service, decorations, and excited children all around. It will be different for each one of us, to a greater or lesser degree. But I do hope you are bringing some sense of expectation to Christmas. The greatest expectation we should have though, is that we shall get closer to our Lord, realising once again the wonder of the great fact that Jesus was born to save us. But as well as waiting for Christmas, we should also bring a readiness to serve. We all have different opportunities... Thinking of someone lonely and doing something to relieve their loneliness, praying for them, sending a card, or a present, whatever. Doing something to help out in the home or at church, or elsewhere...

Expectation, waiting and readiness to serve. All of them essential elements at Christmas. May that be the experience of each one of us this Advent time.

We come to our **time of prayer**.

We thank you, Lord, for the great sense of expectation that there is at this time of the year. The days are getting shorter, but there are things to look forward to: carol services, presents to be given (and we hope received!), gatherings of family and friends. Help us not to be distracted by the incidentals of Christmas that make us forget the glorious truth at the centre of it all: 'our God

contracted to a span. Incomprehensibly made man'. Open our hearts once again this Christmas time to that glorious truth.

Lord, by our prayers and in our lives,
may your Kingdom come.

Lord, we think of those for whom Christmas is not so happy a time, because they will be celebrating alone, or because of the memory of loved ones no longer with them, or because of serious illness. Help us all to be sensitive to the needs of those for whom Christmas brings difficulties.

Lord, by our prayers and in our lives,
may your Kingdom come.

Lord, we think of those places where there is conflict : Yemen, Afghanistan, the Polish/Belarus border, and elsewhere. We think of humanitarian workers: give them the strength and resilience they need.

Lord, by our prayers and in our lives,
may your Kingdom come

We pray for those providing essential services: hospital staff, ambulance staff, fire and rescue services, police, those providing transport services, and others.

Lord, by our prayers and in our lives,
may your Kingdom come.

Lord, we think of our family, our friends and our fellow church members. Some are in special need at this time, through bereavement, illness, concern for those close

to them, heavy responsibilities, or for some other reason. We name them before you... Bless and protect them, we pray. Give them peace in their hearts.

Lord, by our prayers and in our lives,
may your kingdom come.

The Advent 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.

An Advent Blessing

Look forward in hope,
to the coming of your Saviour,
Prepare the way for Christ our Lord.
Welcome him with love and faith.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.
Amen

Revd Tony Coates