



The First Sunday of Advent 27th November 2022

My brothers and sisters, we enter today the solemn season of Advent in which the Church bids us prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ; a coming that we recall in the Child of

Bethlehem; a coming that we experience in the gift of his Spirit, in the bread of the Eucharist, in the joy of human lives that are shared; a coming we wait for when God gathers up all things in Christ. Let us in this holy season reflect on the coming of Christ who brings light to the world. Let us leave behind the darkness of sin, walk in the light that shines on our path, and renew within ourselves the hope of glory to which he beckons us. And as we turn towards the light, let us have on our hearts all those who see no light, for whom all is darkness and despair. Let us pray that they too may be illumined by Christ who is our light.

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

HYMN

1. Hark! A herald voice is calling:
'Christ is nigh' it seems to say;
'cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!'

2. Startled at the solemn warning,
let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling,
shines upon the morning skies

3. Lo! The Lamb, so long expected,
comes with pardon down from heaven;
let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
one and all to be forgiven.

4. So when next he comes with glory,
and earth's final hour draws near,
may he then as our defender
on the clouds of heaven appear.

Invitation to Confession

A voice cries out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'
So let us listen and turn to the Lord in penitence and faith.

Loving and faithful God, as we begin the season of Advent, we celebrate that Jesus has come, and that He promises to come again! Jesus came to bring light and hope, but our hearts are often shrouded by darkness and despair. Jesus came to bring joy and peace, but our hearts are often encased by sorrow and turmoil. Jesus came to bring life and love, but our hearts are often hardened by resistance and contempt. As Jesus entered the world to conquer sin and death, we open our hearts in confession to be cleansed from our sinfulness and to be restored to the image of Jesus.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies
Cleanse us from our sins, +
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

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 for ever.
Amen.

Collect of Advent Sunday

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.

A Reading from The Old Testament Jeremiah 33. 14-16

¹⁴ “‘The days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfil the good promise I made to the people of Israel and Judah.

¹⁵ “‘In those days and at that time
I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.

¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved
and Jerusalem will live in safety.
This is the name by which it will be called:
The LORD Our Righteous Saviour.’

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

- ¹ In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust.
- ² I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- ³ No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.
- ⁴ Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.
- ⁵ Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
- ⁶ Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.
- ⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you, LORD, are good.
- ⁸ Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
- ⁹ He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.



**A Reading from the New Testament
1 Thess. 3. 9-end**

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? ¹⁰ Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

¹¹ Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. ¹² May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

1 Ye servants of the Lord,
each for your master wait,
observant of his heavenly word,
and watchful at his gate.

2 Let all your lamps be bright,
and trim the golden flame;
gird up your loins as in his sight,
for awful is his name.

3 Watch! 'tis your Lord's command,
and while we speak, he's near;
mark the first signal of his hand,
and ready all appear.

4 O happy servant he
in such a posture found!
he shall his Lord with rapture see,
and be with honour crowned.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia.

The Gospel

The Holy Gospel is written in the 21st Chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at the 25th verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord

²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

²⁹ He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

³² “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

³⁴ “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

This is the Gospel of Christ

Praise be to thee, O Christ

Reflection

THE COLLECT FOR PURITY Almighty God, unto Whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name: through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Each week we begin service with the Collect for Purity;

‘Almighty God to whom all hearts are open all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid...’ In a way, It is a confessional prayer, getting ourselves right before we worship God.

We would expect it to say ‘unto whom hearts are open and all the wrong bits, our weakness, falseness and un-holiness is known’, but no, it is more subtle. It is not about what we do, it is about our desires *...all desires known....*

Perhaps we think “Oh that’s nice, God sees all the things I want and desire.” What is it we desire? The desires of our hearts may not be right or good for us. We may desire this or that, but God in his wisdom knows that it will turn to ashes in our mouths, and we will wish it had never been so. It goes on *‘...and from whom no secrets are hid.’* You can fool me, we can fool each other, but God knows the truth.

Our hearts are mentioned twice in today’s readings and both times in relation to the coming of Christ. The term ‘heart’ in scriptural thinking is the seat of emotion and the will. The most inward part of your personality. The you that no one knows except God.

But the idea that God knows us in our totality is also a comfort. There is the real me, a real you, known by God. Before we were even brought into being we were in the mind of God. The scripture says that God would not have created anything unless he loved it. So we are loved, and that is the most profound thought we can grasp and also the hardest. It is not your and my faltering, inconsistent, weak love for God, but God's love for us. If we grasp that it will change our lives.

No wonder we pray – *'cleanse the thoughts of our hearts...'* – our desires our secrets, *'by the inspiration of thy holy Spirit that we may perfectly love thee.'*

Throughout scripture the prime descriptor of God is not his greatness, his power, or his wisdom, not his knowledge, nor his mercy and goodness, it is his holiness. We stand before a God of ultimate and complete holiness, something we can barely understand or imagine. A burning consuming holiness. *'Our God is a consuming fire...'* No wonder in the second reading Paul prays that our their hearts may be *'...strengthened so that we become blameless and holy.* Holy here means – set apart for God. It seems logical to me that the HOLY Spirit of God would want to make my inner heart holy, what other purpose could there be?

In the gospel Jesus warns us to take care that our hearts are not weighed down. I don't expect we are going to do much carousing and drunkenness – but we get the picture. We do understand how our hearts (minds) can be *'weighed down, overburdened with either pleasure or anxieties and burdens of life'*. He recognises how all this can distract us from what is important. As Christians, our relationship with God, day by day matters and should have our attention. I have found that many, if not most of the things I was anxious and worried about, actually never happened.

In the gospel today, Jesus speaks of the coming 'Day of the Lord'. Perhaps we think the second coming of Christ is way off, or maybe we don't believe it will happen. There are about 350 references to Christ's first coming as Jesus of Nazareth, but an estimated 1,845 references to his coming again as the Christ. There is a sense in which every day is a day in which he may come either in power and great glory or at our death for Christ will receive us when we die. *"Be on guard. Be alert at all times, praying that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man"* writes St Paul. There will come a time when we stand before Christ.

We are to live with in the light of eternity for we do not know when we will pass into death. Because of this we must be on our guard and alert, have a steady focus to our lives. Not to allow any 'unfinished' business to lay around, no unforgiveness, no habits kept in secret, nothing left undone we must keep our lives managed and checked. Amidst all the ups and downs we need to remember the bigger picture to keep in mind our ultimate destination, to monitor the state of our hearts.

The weeks of Advent are rather like having a bucket of cold water in our face! The readings are a wakeup call to jolt us out of our doziness. Are we alert, on our guard, or just drifting along? Are we living in the reality of life or a fantasy of our own making?

I am always fascinated to see an ECG reading of my heart, all the little spikes and pauses, that inner measure of my time and my days, so easy to forget it is there, just doing its job. But the heart of our inner being needs our steady and constant attention. Indeed, we must be alert and purposeful now. It is not something that can be deferred to a more convenient time, there may not be one.

If I could have a spiritual ECG, what would it show. Am I awake and alert, is my heart strong and established in Christ, is it pure faultless and unblameable in holiness in the sight of God, are my desires in line with God, what secrets do I harbour?

HYMN

1 Ye servants of the Lord,
each for your master wait,
observant of his heavenly word,
and watchful at his gate.

2 Let all your lamps be bright,
and trim the golden flame;
gird up your loins as in his sight,
for awful is his name.

3 Watch! 'tis your Lord's command,
and while we speak, he's near;
mark the first signal of his hand,
and ready all appear.

4 O happy servant he
in such a posture found!
he shall his Lord with rapture see,
and be with honour crowned.

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Intercessions

In joyful expectation of his coming to our aid
we pray to Jesus.

Come to your Church as Lord and judge.
We pray for our world at this time asking your mercy and aid.
Help us to live in the light of your coming
and give us a longing for your kingdom.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to your world as King of the nations.
We pray for the King and his Government asking you for wisdom and guidance.
Before you rulers will stand in silence.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to the suffering as Saviour and comforter.
We pray for those known to us and those who have asked for our prayers...
Break into our lives,
where we struggle with sickness and distress,
and set us free to serve you for ever.
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come to us as shepherd and guardian of our souls.

We remember those who have died this night, those we love and see no longer.

Give us with all the faithful departed
a share in your victory over evil and death.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come from heaven, Lord Jesus, with power and great glory.

Lift us up to meet you,
that with St Peter, all your saints and angels
we may live and reign with you in your new creation.

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus, do not delay;
give new courage to your people,
who trust in your love.

By your coming, raise us to share in the joy of your kingdom
on earth as in heaven,
where you live and reign with the Father and the Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

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.

A Blessing for Advent Sunday

The Dismissal Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.' *Mark 1.14,15*

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

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.

Amen.

HYMN

1. 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.

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

3. Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.

4. By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.

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