



SERVICE FOR PERSONAL USE: November 29th 2020

ADVENT SUNDAY

Today is Advent Sunday. The church gives us four Sundays to 'get ready' for the birth of Christ.

Should advent; the time before Christmas, be bigger than Lent; the time before Easter? Whatever other preparations you need to make, for a very different 'Covid' Christmas, read and think about today's bible readings which set the scene.

Call to worship:

The waiting begins, again.

The breathing in, the holding on.

Can you be patient, this advent season?

*Can you make space for Jesus to be born again. HERE,
TODAY?????????????*

Hymn: Singing the Faith 180 O come, O come, Immanuel (H + Psalms 85, MP 493)

Opening prayers:

READY: O God, you are full of majesty and power, yet you humbled yourself and sent your son to live amongst us. You gave your Holy Spirit to be our power here and now. We know how much we need you, yet so often we let you down. Our prayers can be selfish and our compassion is cold. In a moment of quiet we say sorry.....

STEADY: we ask for your supportive strength as we seek to grow in faith in these uncertain times. We want a firm faith that draws on your resources.

GO: we want to go forward into this Advent and Christmas season shining like the stars in a dark world. We want to reflect you, Jesus, the light of the world.

Reading: Isaiah 64 v1-9.

Isaiah calls on God to rend or tear down the heavens! The coming of God is associated with mountains shaking and brushwood bursting into flame. Verse 7 says that “No-one calls upon your name”. The people had distanced themselves from God (more than 2 metres?) by doing their own thing.

For all the violent imagery, Isaiah ends this passage (v8) with the idea that “we are the clay, you are the potter, we are all the work of your hand”. Here is an image for us to take into Advent; our self-centeredness does not allow God to ‘work’ us into that which he wants us to be.

Reading: Mark 13 v 24-37

The whole of chapter 13 points to ‘signs of the end of the age’ or the second coming of Christ.

The central message of our passage is ‘keep awake’ or ‘keep watch’. This adds to the Isaiah section “no-one calls on your name”. People have forgotten or ignored God. In Mark, Jesus is asking for a commitment to God’s message; a level of alertness to what is happening in the world around his hearers (then and now!). Think, who has asked you to be ‘ALERT’: recently? Alert and aware of big things happening around you, and the importance of your individual response or reaction to that call.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 691 What shall our greeting be? (H + Ps 806)

Reading: I Corinthians 1 v 3-9 New International Version

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

For in him you have been enriched in every way- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge- because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.

Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly await for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

What shall our greeting be? Hello? Hi? Hey up? How are you?

Paul greets the Corinthians, wishing them well and offering them grace and peace from God himself. He is ALWAYS thankful that their lives show the grace offered by Christ himself.

He then describes them as not lacking spiritual gifts, God keeping them strong and blameless. They are called into fellowship with Jesus by a faithful God.

The bit I like best is that Paul is genuinely chuffed to bits that his testimony has been confirmed in them. How does he know this?

Because in Christ their lives have been enriched in every way: their speaking and knowledge really stand out as a witness to Christ. (see v5).

PHEW! Just go back and read the passage again; in this version and another if you have one.

**Put your name into the passage (you / your.....is YOU).*

** We don't meet so many folk now. How important are those times when we do make contact; by phone, email, letter or in the street on our walk.*

Are we able to pass on our thankfulness to God for those people?

Is our speaking and knowledge a testimony to our life lived in Christ?

Prayers of intercession: Response " Faithful God, give your strength".

For those who are sick and dying.....

For those whose work is healing of body, mind or spirit.....

For those who feel helpless, distraught.....

For those in government and the Civil service making difficult decisions about Covid and Brexit.....

For ourselves: our hopes and fears.....Faithful God, give your strength. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn Singing the Faith 494 Come, thou fount of every blessing. (H+Ps 517)

As Paul finished his 1st letter to Corinth: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus.