



Written Service for 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021 – 1st Sunday in Advent  
– Erica Hartley

### **Call to Worship**

Come and rest awhile in God presence  
Come with hope  
Come with expectation  
Come knowing that God will meet you in this hour.

### **Hymn 172 StF, 237H&P Hills of the North rejoice**

*If it is safe to do so, you may like to like a candle during our worship as a reminder of the hope of Jesus coming in to a world of darkness, bringing light.*

### **Prayers**

Let us pray:  
Lord we come to you with Joy  
Knowing that you love us deeply.  
You were there at the beginning  
You created the world and all that is in it,  
Your mighty power is on show in the world around us.  
You have been present throughout history,  
reaching out to your people with generosity and with love.  
You sent your Son, Jesus, to be born at Bethlehem,  
A gift of love, to set us free from the darkness.  
And your Spirit is with us now as we wait in hope for your coming  
And while we wait, we will worship and adore you.

But Lord, we often let you down, we are so busy,  
We get so tied up with the preparations for our Christmas  
that we forget about welcoming you  
and accepting the gift you give through your Son.  
We don't give you the room that you need to refresh us  
and fill us with your love.  
We don't spend time preparing ourselves  
or others for when you will come again.  
Forgive us for all that we get wrong.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

**Amen**

### **The Lord's prayer**

Our Old Testament reading is set at a time after the great kingdom that David ruled over has split, with Israel in the North and Judah in the South. Many prophets spoke God's messages about the destruction to come. By Jeremiah's time, Israel have been invaded by Assyria and the people taken away. Then the Babylonians invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem, some people had been taken away into exile and Jeremiah the outspoken prophet who had been giving God's message of destruction, was under guard. It is now that Jeremiah offers God's word of hope to both Israel and Judah.

### **Reading Jeremiah 33:14-16**

Our New Testament Reading is taken from Luke and is set just after the one we had from Mark a couple of weeks ago. The disciples had been looking at great building of the temple and marvelling at the great stones and building and this is part of the discussion that follows.

### **Reading Luke 21:25-36**

### **Hymn 169 StF, 81 H&P, 102 MP Come thou long expected Jesus**

We had the tree in our front garden chopped down a few years ago, it had been planted by the builders when our house was first built and we couldn't take it down for at least 10 years. The only thing I liked about that tree was the deep pink blossom, the rest of the year it was in the wrong place, it dripped sap onto the car, stopped light coming in to the house, and we would knock our head on the branches, we threatened every year to take it down once we were allowed, but each year the blossom came out and it was saved for another year. In the end it went, taken down in a couple of hours.

It was a little bit like that with the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. While King David was on the throne the kingdom became powerful and peaceful. But then everything went wrong, the whole nation from the Kings, priests, prophets and officials to the poorest in the land, all moved away from God. They started following Idols and the leaders were oppressing the poor and needy. God had been warning them that disaster would come, he gave them plenty of chances to turn back to him but they didn't listen. Now other nations were attacking them, God was literally cutting them down to a stump.

But the prophet Jeremiah offered Gods words of hope into a seemingly hopeless situation. God said that even though this divided nation was like a tree cut down, a new branch would sprout from it, a new person would come, he would execute justice and righteousness, saving them and reconnecting the people to God, we see that new branch in the person of Jesus.

The prophets often used nature to share God's messages whether it was showing that God wasn't happy with what the people did, or that there was hope in the darkest of times. Jesus also used images from nature to teach the disciples, why wouldn't he? Even today, in the middle of a city, we all look out for the changes in nature during the year. We wait with hope for the signs of spring, the first crocuses and daffodils, the first buds to grow on the trees, the first blossom.

Jesus had just told the disciples that temple would be destroyed; the old faith and laws would make way for the new kingdom of God. The disciples asked the inevitable questions, when? and how will we know? Just as they look for the signs in nature each year, they needed to look for the signs in the heavens and on the earth.

The first people reading the gospel of Luke lived in a world where political tensions were running high between the Roman Emperors and Israel, there was also the risk for Christians of persecution and arrest, they perhaps expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. We know there are tensions between nations in our time and we are struggling with the climate but most generations could say they might have noticed some signs that Jesus might return, but we are still here, waiting 2000 years later.

Maybe it doesn't matter when Jesus will come back, it's more about what we can do while we are here to be ready for his return. If we are not careful we can become complacent, and not notice the urgency in Luke's writing to be alert and prepared for Jesus's return. One of my favourite hymns is 'Give me the faith which can remove', verse 2 says:

*I would the precious time redeem,  
and longer live for this alone:  
to spend, and to. Be spent, for them  
who have not yet my Saviour known;  
fully on these my mission prove,  
and only breathe, to breathe they love.*

In being prepared for Jesus's coming we need to be sharing the good news about Jesus and work for a fairer world, after all we only have one chance, one lifetime. We need to recommit our energies to things that have real value in the Kingdom of God using Jesus as our model.

And what about Hope, we started this reflection looking at the hope that Jeremiah brought to the peoples of Israel and Judah, even though they were cut down to a stump. Our hope is in Jesus, it is not the same sort of hope that we have when we stand waiting for a bus on a cold soggy morning, we are never really sure that the bus will turn up and we sometimes have to walk away and get to our destination by a different route. Our hope in Jesus is a

sure and certain hope that he will return and we need to prepare ourselves and others for that time, for all we know it could be tomorrow.

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

Lord, we come to you in Joy to say, Thank you.

We thank you for all the good things that have done for us,  
all the good things you have given to us.

We thank you for your beautiful creation,  
Even in the darkness and bleakness of November  
we can be encouraged by nature  
resting and waiting for new life to come.

We pray for all those who are celebrating,  
that their joy may be complete  
and they can see that you are with them in their joy.

We thank you that you remind us as Christmas lights start to glow  
that you are the one who brings light into the world.

Lord help us to share your joy with those we meet this week.

*Silence*

Lord, we come to you with hope,  
hope that you are involved with all the situations that trouble us.

We pray for places where there are tensions and division  
be with those working for peace and unity.

We pray for our leaders guide them to work for justice  
and the good of all, not just the few.

We remember those who struggle to fulfill the hopes of children,  
families and friends at Christmas because of unemployment or poverty.

We pray for those who find this time of year difficult  
because of loneliness or bereavement.

We pray for those who are sick in body and mind,  
enfold them with your love.

We remember those who have died, especially those who have died hoping  
in the promises of God.

*Silence*

Lord, we lay all our prayers before you, accept them through the name of  
your son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

### **Hymn 185 StF, 602 MP Sing we the King who is coming to reign**

#### **Blessing**

Go in to this week with Joy in your heart  
Share your hope with those you meet  
Knowing that God will go with you.