



Church at Home Advent Sunday Sunday 29th November 2020

'Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved'. Psalm 80:3

Advent starts today ... four weeks to get ready for the mystery of Christmas and to reflect on the comings of Christ - in history as a child, into our hearts as our Lord and Saviour, and at the end of time as King and Judge, when every eye shall see him. The Abridge Christmas lights are turned on today ... sadly not with the same crowds and ceremony as in previous years ... but nevertheless lights will be shining in the darkness offering hope as we come to the end of what has been a long Advent-type year of waiting: waiting for a cure to this pandemic and for a light at the end of the lockdown tunnels. Let's join with Christians locally and nationally as we pray for our world and for all who have suffered loss in 2020 and for many who face an uncertain future, praying 'Come, Lord Jesus come'.

This Sunday's Bible readings include:



Isaiah 64: 1-9 – The prophet longs for God to come to earth dramatically, as happened at Mount Sinai long ago, and yet at the same time he realises that none of us is worthy to stand before God. The prophet speaks more than he knows however, when he also announces that God's coming will be beyond anything we can imagine, because it is God's grace that we wait for.

Psalm 80: 1-7 – The psalmist too longs for God's coming as the great Shepherd King and also speaks more than he knows when he longs for the One who will stand at God's right hand.

1 Corinthians 1: 3-9 1: 15 – Paul prays for the Christians in Corinth to be enriched with God's gifts as they await the return of Jesus Christ – 'the Day of the Lord'

Mark 13: 24-37 – **Jesus** speaks to his disciples about staying alert for his return, comparing it to noticing the signs that summer is near, as well as using an everyday story of servants waiting for the return of their master from travel. But, Jesus reminds them and us, only God knows the day and the hour.

Suggested hymns: [Come thou long expected Jesus](#); [Hail to the Lord's anointed](#); [O come, o come, Emmanuel](#);

An Advent prayer of invitation, as we still ourselves to worship God.

Come, Lord, come down, come in, come among us.

Enter into our darkness with your light.

Come fill our emptiness with your presence.

Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory.

Come refresh, renew, restore us.

Come, Lord, come down, come in, come among us. Amen

(David Adam, Traces of Glory)

Take a moment to bring the past week before God, remembering the good things that God has done for you, and also acknowledging those words, thoughts and deeds that have let God and yourself down. Use the **Collect for Advent** as a prayer of recommitment to the way of Jesus and a reminder of the hope to which we are called:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

Suggested hymns: [The people who in darkness walked](#); [Waiting here for you by Chris Tomlin](#); [Make way, make way \(Graham Kendrick\)](#)

Some thoughts on today's Gospel:

On the first Sunday of Advent it is traditional that the lighting of the first candle reminds us of the words of the prophets in the Old Testament who looked forward to the coming of Christ. They spoke more than they knew, but would still have been amazed by what actually happened on the first Christmas. In our Gospel reading, when Jesus talks to his disciples outside the Temple in Holy Week, he sounds like one of the Old Testament prophets and actually quotes from their writings when describing the end of the world. I suspect the disciples did not really understand what he was talking about. Maybe the key point is that God often 'turns up' in surprising ways and Jesus is urging them and us to watch out and be ready for God, not just at the end of time but throughout our whole life. Only God knows when it will be time to wrap up history and when the final re-creation of the world will take place; so, rather than speculate on that, let us be alert to how God comes to us in surprising ways each and every day. If we're not alert to those comings, then, like the servants in Jesus short parable, we will probably be found asleep at the final coming. Let's pray to stay alert for whatever God wants to say to us and do through us this coming week, this Advent, and beyond.

Suggested Hymns: [Lo, he comes with clouds descending](#); [Thy Kingdom come, O God](#)

For our prayers, let us remember:

- our leaders and the difficult decisions about what is happening next after this latest lockdown and in particular plans for Christmas
- our hospital staff treating patients suffering from COVID 19 and relatives waiting anxiously unable to visit
- employers and employees on furlough, worried about the security of their jobs and businesses
- today's news headlines and any particular situations and people in other countries that God has placed on your heart
- those known to us who are ill, in hospital, awaiting treatment, anxious or who have been bereaved

Add any other particular people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

A final hymn: [Hark the glad sound!](#)

End the time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond

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