

Advent Sunday (29.11.2020)

Hope for all God's people

HYMN: Come, thou long-expected Jesus

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.

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

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

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

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Watch, wait, hope!
Even now, the tender leaves of peace
may be growing on the trees of life.
Watch, wait, hope!
For the wonder of new love
may be moving towards its birthing.
The Christ will come.
The Word of God will not fail us.

Keep awake!
For the shadows of our doubts will be lifted
and the singing is sounding in the distance.

**The Christ will come.
The Word of God will not fail us.**

WELCOME

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

As we light the first candle,
we remember all God's people waiting in hope
for the coming of Jesus.

The first candle is lit

**God, as we wait for your promise,
give light, give hope.**

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

In the Spirit of Advent,
we watch for the signs of that which is to come.
We look for them here in this place,
held within our midst in promises of joy.
**Come, gracious Jesus, come.
This we pray in your name.
Amen.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving God, we know that
we are not always good at watching for your Word.

We sometimes confuse our word with yours
or bow to ideas which seem to our advantage
or which others create to threaten us with your judgement.

Silent reflection

Be patient with our failures, O God.
Be present in our watching, Jesus Christ.

We confess to you that often we would rather not wait
for your Word, O God.

Sometimes we long for instant solutions
to issues which arise in our lives
and refuse to pause and pray and listen for your truth.
Sometimes we are so impatient
that we decide what your Word will look like before it comes to us.
We create you in our own image
rather than honouring your Godliness.

Silent reflection

Be patient with our failures, O God.
Be present in our watching, Jesus Christ.

Then, O God, we know that hope is often hard to hold.
We become depressed and discouraged
and turn away from steady faithfulness in each moment
instead of holding to your promises.

Silent reflection

Be patient with our failures, O God.
**Be present in our watching, Jesus Christ,
and come to us this day.
Amen.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The promises of God are wider than the ocean,
deeper than the earth and higher than the skies.
The grace of Jesus Christ will never fail us.
We are forgiven!
Thanks be to God.

COLLECT

God of Advent,
we live in the promise that you will fulfill your will for the earth.
Yet nations are in chaos and our lives in turmoil.

Gather us together to begin our watch for the coming of your Promised One.
Lead us through the chaos by a watchful heeding spirit.
In the name of the One who is to come, we pray. Amen.

READINGS

Isaiah 64: 1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,
and do not remember iniquity for ever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Mark 13: 24-37

‘But in those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

‘But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.’

REFLECTION

INTERCESSIONS

O God, we know that our prayers
are the signs of our hope in you.

Even as our faith is challenged by many things,
even as we sometimes do not know what to pray,
we come into your presence,
trusting that you will listen and respond to us in love.
These are those who are closest to our hearts this day:

The people pray

Add your prayers to ours, Holy Spirit,
for your wisdom is far beyond our knowing.

Wait with us as we try to understand our part
in the well-being of those who wait for love, O God.
Watch over them as they hope for a world which cares enough to act
with a new justice, compassion and as agents of freedom.
Give to us here an energy and passion for good change
and a faithfulness so that we never give up,
even when we cannot see the way ahead.
**Grant to us a spirit of adventure, O God,
as we walk towards impossible dreams,
for we know that nothing is impossible for you.
This we pray in your name, Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

PEACE

May the God of peace make you completely holy,
ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

COMMISSIONING

Do not delay.

The day of the coming of the Christ is every day.

Let us walk forward in Christ's way.

BENEDICTION

And may Christ be seen when we look behind us,
the Spirit be found walking ahead within our hopes
and the eyes of God the Creator look with love over all creation.

Amen.

HYMN: Lo, he comes with clouds descending

Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
once for favoured sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:

Alleluia!

God appears, on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold him
robed in glorious majesty;
we who set at nought and sold him,
pierced and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing,
shall the true Messiah see.

Sing, amen, let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory:
claim the kingdom for thine own:
come, Lord Jesus!
Everlasting God, come down!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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