**Morning Praise @ Home 28th November 2021**

**Advent Sunday**



**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**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**

### Bible Readings Jeremiah 33:14 – 16 Luke 21:25 – 36

**Reflection from Philip**

**It’s about time….**

So here we are, the First Sunday of Advent.

When I was little I used to love being given an Advent calendar. I think it might have been re-used a number of times actually. But that didn’t bother me. I loved the deep blue of the night sky, with golden yellow stars shining, the nativity scene, or the shepherds in the fields, with possibly just a touch of glitter…

I’d eagerly look forward to opening a new window each morning to reveal – no, not a mini chocolate bar, (this was the late 1960’s & 70’s!) but a little printed colour scene, a picture in a picture. As we got nearer to the big day, I’d look forward to the final picture, perhaps the baby Jesus in a crib, or the star….

There was something magic about those simple but colourful Advent calendars. They were part of the excitement of looking ahead to Christmas, of anticipation. I loved Advent. I think I loved it more than Christmas day itself. Buying gifts, making gifts, wrapping them, getting the Christmas tree, Mum busy baking.

 Advent is all about looking ahead, to the birth of Jesus, but the passage from Luke we heard (which is usually read at the start of Advent) might have sounded apocalyptic. However the passage is also about anticipation, looking ahead to a time when ‘there will be signs’. To a time when ‘we will see the Son of Man coming’.

You can imagine how in the years immediately after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the followers of Jesus would have been looking anxiously for the implementation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth – that was what it was all about, wasn’t it? They had grown up in a tradition of expecting a Messiah to overthrow the hated Roman rulers.

Although Jesus had regularly preached of a different type of Kingdom – for example in the Sermon on the Mount, it would be the meek, not the powerful who inherited the earth, where the usual ideas of wealth & power were turned on their head. The Jews still hoped for a dramatic change in the status of Israel, and they hoped for it very soon. One of the subjects we have been told to study on the Chester Diocese training course I’m doing at the moment is the rather daunting sounding subject of ‘Eschatology’ – basically the ‘study of the end times’. It’s all great fun!

There are 3 main ‘schools’ about the nature and timing of the coming of the Kingdom of God:

In that early Jewish tradition, the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven was seen as a future event, eagerly awaited. In the 1900’s, Christian writers also looked at the preaching of Jesus as pointing to a dramatic and imminent time which would then start the Kingdom of God.

Other writers have looked at Jesus’ preaching as it applied to present day issues – they considered Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection as having already started a realisation of The Kingdom of God.

Then the third ‘school’ of thought – that agreed a realisation of the Kingdom of God had started, but that there were as yet unfulfilled elements of the Kingdom of God that are still to come – that we are in a sort of ‘in-between times’. Importantly this last school of thought focuses on ‘Kingdom Living’ now – that we don’t just wait for the end of times, but that we live our lives as Christ taught us now, enabled by the Holy Spirit.

I must say I find this third perspective the most helpful. Live Kingdom Lives now, don’t wait for the end of times, or your death. But we should also look forward to a future time when God’s Kingdom is fully established here on earth.

OK, enough beginners’ theology! Let’s talk about something straight forward – time itself. Can’t get much simpler than that, can you? Well have you ever looked at Professor Stephen Hawking’s book ‘A brief history of time’?

Time can be distorted by gravity. Atomic clocks actually do run slower on the International Space Station than they do here on earth. All sorts of things happen to time should you happen to stumble across a black hole, such as the one at the heart of our galaxy (and we believe, at the heart of every galaxy).

Watching a boiling kettle slows down time. Scientific fact. Well, no, Hawking didn’t actually say that, but it ***feels*** like it does…. Time on holiday goes faster than time in the office – unless there is a deadline in the office and then time ***flies*** by….!

In the Greek New Testamant there are different words for different types of time. The time of clocks and calendars was called **Chronos.** It’s how we measure time. The sort of time that stops everything from happening all at once. Sequential time.

But they had another type of time, ***Kairos.*** This sort of time is ‘the right time’, the ‘fullness of time’, or ‘an opportune moment’. ‘Timely’ perhaps.

God is not constrained by *Chronos* time. In God’s ‘*Kairos*’ time, past & future are woven together for the sake of today. God’s Kairos time is the now/not yet time that re-shapes the world’s expectations – and our own. Much like the timing of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The apocalyptic vision shared by Jesus in Luke’s gospel is an assurance that even in the face of devastation

 – whether caused by natural disasters, or human greed (or both), in the face of global pandemics, and our own traumas when we experience grief, relationship breakdown, illness – God will still be there alongside us.

No matter how much it seems the world is falling apart, God’s way endures.

In Ecclesiastes 3 we read that there is **a time** for everything, to everything *there is a season*.

I find those words from Ecclesiastes 3 in that great song by The Byrds very comforting. 8 years ago, shortly after my mother died suddenly **and** unexpectedly, I remember hearing it on the radio and it helped – I felt somehow calmed & reassured. Those words put time and our lives in perspective – everything in its proper place. *Kairos* time.

Advent is all about time – a time to look ahead, to look for signs…..a time also to reflect.

But let us focus on *Kairos* time, not Chronos time. Let us be comforted that whatever troubles are ahead, God will endure and he will be with us. Amen

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ

known in the world? **We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Basil**

On this first Sunday of Advent we pray

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**

When I say: Lord, stir up your strength.

May we reply together: **And come among us.**

Come, Lord, and be known in your church, for without You we have no message, we have no power,

that we may proclaim your peace.

Lord, make us aware and alert to your coming that we may reveal your glory in all the world.

We pray for those that walk in darkness that they may see your light. We remember those whose lives are clouded with troubles and pray that they may behold your glory.

Lord, stir up your strength.

**And come among us.**

Come, Lord, and give peace to your world. Disperse the clouds of war and violence, of calamity and disaster. Let Your power and Your glory be revealed to the nations.

We pray for all who watch and wait while we sleep: for police, hospital workers, and ambulance workers, for fire fighters and for all who work in the dark hours of the night.

Lord, stir up your strength.

**And come among us.**

Come, Lord, be known in our homes that our homes may reflect your love.

Come into our work places that they may reflect your glory, that we may rejoice in each other’s presence, that we may be fully aware of others and sensitive to their needs.

Lord, stir up your strength.

**And come among us.**

Come, Lord, to all who are unable to cope at this time, to all who are weighed down with troubles. We pray for the ill and all who have the care of them.

We pray for all in hospital and in nursing homes at this time.

We remember all whose lives are clouded with despair, for those who are depressed and suicidal.

Lord, stir up your strength.

**And come among us.**

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so 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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be,

that you may live and work to his praise and glory,

and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**