

Barthol Chapel and Tarves Sunday 29 November 2020

First Sunday in Advent Worship Materials



Advent Invitation to Worship (from Spill the Beans material)

Place the cloth,
prepare the table;
look for hope
and light the candle.

Ring the bells,
bring out the cradle;
look for peace
birthed in the stable.

Praise CH4 273 (Omit v3)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, O come, thou Lord of might,
Who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe:

Sing the songs,
through starshine's sparkle;
look for love:
in manger's marvel.

Deck the halls
and 'hark!' with angels—
look for joy:
Come, all ye faithful!

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery:

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and
cheer,
our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight:

Hope – The theme for the first Sunday of Advent is hope. You might like to light your own advent candle and say the following prayer,

*A candle burns
The first marker of our Advent journey
As we set out
May we travel hopefully
As we set out
God of journeys, travel with us.*

(Adapted from Signposts through Advent by David Hamflett)

Take a moment to think about the images, pictures or objects which symbolise hope for you.

The Word of God: Mark 13:24-37

The Coming of the Son of Man

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

and the moon will not give its light,

25 and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. 27 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.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

28 '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. 29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. 30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.'

The Necessity for Watchfulness

32 'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. 34 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. 35 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, 36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Reflection

You might be forgiven for wondering how and where today's reading ties in with the theme of hope. The reading began with Jesus presenting a not so subtle picture of a grim future – a world falling apart.

"In those days, after that suffering

The sun will be darkened

And the moon will not give its light from heaven

And the stars will be falling from heaven

And the powers in the heavens will be shaken"

A very dark picture indeed! On this the first Sunday of Advent, when the rest of the world is getting into gear for the festive season, our readings point us in a very different direction. At the beginning of the Church's year our Gospel reading shows us a picture of a world falling apart. The language is apocalyptic – a dark sun, a quenched moon, stars falling from the sky. The picture is stark – creation coming undone. It is passages like these that give rise to all kinds of predictions about the end of the world. It is not so long ago

that such predictions were the preserve of the street preacher with the sandwich board – “Repent – the end is nigh!” But today apocalyptic language is much more common. We read it in the pages of newspapers or social media. We hear it from scientists and schoolchildren, conservationists, celebrities and world leaders. All of them are clear that we are in the ‘end times’ as far as our planet and the future of all living species, including humanity, are concerned.

Climate change and accompanying natural disasters, world pandemics such as Covid 19, the refugee crisis, the terrorist threat, the ever-widening gap between rich and poor... these are just some of the apocalyptic drivers of our time. For most people these things are a source of worry and fear; for some they are an opportunity to take stock; to choose to live differently and more responsibly from now on; and, of course, for a tiny few they represent a chance to enrich themselves even further at other’s and the world’s expense.

But why, at the beginning of the festive season are we being asked to think about these things. Why in the midst of organising Messy Church Advent bags, a community lessons and carols walk, a Zoom nativity service, a netful of angels - why as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the child who will bring “peace and goodwill” on earth, are we reading about his coming back “in power and glory” to bring it all to an end? Most of us spend so much time keeping things together and under control that we struggle when we are faced with a passage like this – one that reminds us of our frailty and vulnerability.

When Jesus paints the picture of a world plunging into darkness, he exposes the fears of his friends. But he does not stop there. Reading on we hear Jesus say, *“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 end of heaven”*.

Of course, this language and imagery sounds strange to us. But for the people for whom Mark originally wrote his Gospel it was not strange at all. Clouds in the Old Testament are frequently associated with God’s presence. Jesus was speaking to his followers in language that they knew and understood to offer them this reassurance - even when their deepest fears do become a reality, even when the very worst that can happen happens, ultimately, in God’s own time and with God’s own presence and power, Jesus will return to reign. And at that time all people of every age and generation will be gathered into God’s kingdom of love.

Even though all the other lights in our lives flicker and die there is one light that will never be extinguished and that light is none other than Jesus himself who brings the light of God’s love into the world. Even though the world may fall apart, even though creation may come undone – even though heaven and earth pass away - these promises cannot fail because they are the words of the God whose nature is love. And from this love, as the apostle Paul wrote, nothing in all creation can separate us.

This is the love that exposes our deepest fears, our greatest insecurities. But this too is the love that addresses these fears and insecurities with a hope for the future that is beyond our imagining. And it is this love that sets us free from our own concerns to minister to the needs of others. For this love not only points us to the way in which Christ will one day return as king. It also shows us how he comes into people’s lives today. And

reminds us that until the end of time whenever that might be, however that might happen, we have a role to play in bringing the reign of his kingdom of love to bear in the world.

Christian Aid have chosen as their theme for this Advent and Christmas “love builds hope”. Their materials point out that it is when we reach out beyond ourselves to care for God’s world, that hope grows and grows. Love and hope are profoundly intertwined. You can read more about Christian Aid’s appeal and the work they are doing on their website. And because we will not be taking our usual Christmas offerings for others this year, I would encourage you to think about making a donation to help others. It could be to Christian Aid or to some other charity that is close to your heart. This is one way of acting in love to build hope for others. In the meantime, churches up and down the country are being invited to join in singing or reading today, the carol “When out of poverty is born” as a sign of the love and hope they share. The words are printed below

CH4 291 When out of poverty is born

When out of poverty is born
a dream that will not die
a landless, weary folk find strength
to stand with heads held high,
it's then we learn from those who wait
to greet the promised day:
'The Lord is coming; don't lose heart
Be blest: prepare the way!'

When people wander far from God,
forget to share their bread,
they find their wealth an empty thing,
their spirits are not fed.

For only just and tender love the hungry
soul will stay.
And so God's prophets echo still:
“Be blest: prepare the way!”

When God took flesh and came to earth,
the world turned upside down,
and in the strength of women's faith
the Word of Life was born.
She knew that God would raise the low,
it pleased her to obey.
Rejoice with Mary in the call:
'Be blest: prepare the way!'

Pointers for Prayer

- Give thanks for the work of scientists and researchers who are making progress towards a vaccine
- Remember those suffering from or bereaved by the corona virus
- The NHS
- The governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland and their advisers
- Businesses struggling and all who are facing redundancy and financial hardship
- Family, friends and neighbours, those most affected by the current restrictions
- The United States as they prepare for a new president

You might like to close your time of prayer with the Lord’s prayer.

Praise CH4 281 People look East

People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
 Christ who brings new life to earth.
 Set every peak and valley humming

With the word, the Lord is coming.
 People, look east and sing today:
 Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Blessing

Notices

Next Sunday 6 December

9.45am for 10.00am Joint Worship on Zoom (Service commences 10.00am) If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your land-line please contact: Rob e-mail sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org or Susanna Tel 851345 or e-mail smbichard@aol.com.

Advent Worship

During the four Sundays of Advent our worship is linked to the traditional themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. Over the next week please think about these themes and e-mail Alison with suggestions of objects or images that symbolise for you one of these themes and I will include these in our worship. It would be good to have one from everyone who has been taking part in these Zoom services.

Also we are still looking for photos (preferably local) to include in prayer powerpoints.

Wednesday Worship Tarves Church 2.00pm a short act of worship in the Church. This week it will be led by Susanna.

Care in the Community if you are aware of anyone in Tarves who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887. If you are aware of anyone in Barthol Chapel please contact James Hepburn 806611.

Pastoral Care Please contact the Minister 01651 851295

Christmas Offerings As we will not be taking our special offerings for others this year you might like to support Christian Aid or Crossreach's Covid -19 Emergency Appeal. Their websites have details of their work and you can donate on-line. Alternatively you may have another charity you would like to support.