

St Swithun's Church Family

Advent Sunday



Worshipping together in Spirit

Sunday 29th November 2020

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** – ideally at 10am on Sunday so that we know we are joining our prayers together but any time is good. Use a candle and a cross if you can find them to give your worship a focus.*

The children might like to use the Sunday school resources provided by Izzy.

This is a Service of The Word. It doesn't matter if you are one person or a family together – use the booklet and go through the words – stop and reflect as you need to. We are going to record this service again and add it to the website www.saintswithuns.org.uk There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.

Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.

You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...

O come, O come Emmanuel

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07w4479>

Lo he comes

<https://youtu.be/D-5ACjv23-Q>

Come thou long expected Jesus

<https://youtu.be/OFApQnaaj18>

Hark what a sound

<https://youtu.be/MkeMTbilzXE>

Introduction

Today is Advent Sunday – it is the Church's New year and the beginning of our preparation for Christmas. As we worship together in Spirit – in hope that we can meet together in person next week – let us remember the hope we have in God's love.

The Gathering

The Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you

Advent Wreath Prayer

Lord Jesus, light of the world,
born in David's city of Bethlehem,
born like him to be a king:
be born in our hearts at Christmas,
be King of our lives today.

Amen.



Opening Prayer

Into our world as into Mary's womb,

come, Lord Jesus!

Into the forgotten places as into the stable,

come, Lord Jesus!

Into the lives of the poor, bringing hope;

into the lives of the powerful, bringing generosity;

into the lives of the weary, bringing rest;

into the lives of the wise, bringing restlessness;

into our lives; into our longings; whatever our estate,

come, Lord Jesus!

Blessed are those who wait on the Lord!

Amen. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

As we prepare to say sorry to God let us take a moment of quiet to recall our behaviour, our relationships, our attitude over the past few days – what do we need to repent of? What have we ignored or stayed silent on that we should say sorry for?

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Lord in your mercy

Lord in your mercy

Christ in your mercy

Christ in your mercy

Lord in your mercy

Lord in your mercy



We know that God forgives us when we say sorry

We are forgiven

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by the Spirit,
and raise us to new life in the risen Christ.

Amen.

Advent Carol

**Lo! He comes, with clouds descending,
once for mortal sinners slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train.**

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

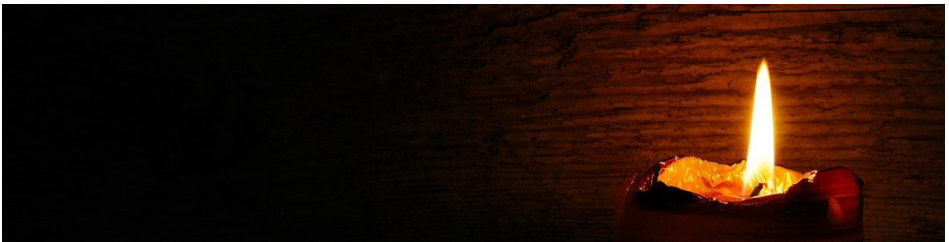
God appears on earth to reign.

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

**Sing, amen! Let all adore thee,
high on thy eternal throne;**

**Saviour, take the power and glory,
claim the kingdom for thine own:**

**Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus
Everlasting God. come down!**



The Collect

**Almighty God, as your kingdom dawns,
turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness,
that we may be ready to meet you
in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

Amen

The Liturgy of the Word



God, the light of the minds that know you,
the life of the souls that love you,
and the strength of the wills that serve you:
Help us so to know you that we may truly love you,
and so to love you that we may fully serve you,
whom to serve is perfect freedom
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

St. Augustine of Hippo

The Gospel Reading

Mark 13 24-end

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark
Glory to you, O Lord.

‘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.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

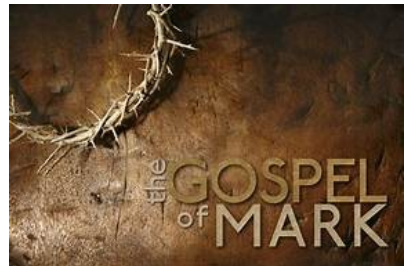
Sermon *Mother Juliet*

Today marks a new beginning – it is our new year in the church – so happy new year! This week we will also have a new beginning in our country as we come out of lockdown number 2... in time to save Christmas – Boris our saviour! Or something like that...

In the Church Advent Sunday - means that the lectionary readings change to a focus on a different gospel account of our actual saviour – the one who really saves Christmas.

This year we are looking at the Gospel of Mark smattered with some Gospel of John.

If you are looking for a holy thing to do this Advent - I suggest – reading the whole of Mark's gospel – as it is good to get an overarching sense of the writing. If you read the whole gospel you will notice that Mark doesn't start with the birth narratives – he is rather immediate and a bit rushed in feel (I like this gospel – maybe because I have that same sense of urgency about life). The stories are generally shorter and less detailed than in the other gospels.



So Advent Sunday is here and it means we are now officially looking forward to Christmas. I happen to know that quite a few of us have been listening to Christmas music or decorating our homes well ahead of time – and I find this absolutely right this year – for we need light and hope in our world and our lives with all the challenges we are facing and Christmas and our lead up to Christmas gives us some much needed sparkle back.



One of the themes of Advent Sunday and in this reading is for us to 'be alert or stay alert' – which of course is also something we have heard a lot this year – earlier in the year we were all told to stay alert to combat the covid-19 pandemic – this slogan caused a great deal of confusion and humour – we were asking how is being alert supposed to prevent a virus?



The things we were to be alert to – it turns out were being more aware of our bodies and how we feel so we don't cough the virus on anyone – being more aware of things around us so that we could remain clean and free from disease – so washing hands and covering with face masks when out and about on essential trips to the shops so we don't pass drops of virus to anyone – being alert to not touching – obviously to prevent any movement of virus.

So our world feels a bit like the Advent theme. Be alert!
But a bit like the response to the government slogan – what are we supposed to be alert to in Advent?

In our reading being alert is about end of the world stuff – 'after that suffering the sun will be darkened'. That description of bleakness resonates with our world now – in the global pandemic – we are constantly talking about end times – when the pandemic will end – when the lockdown will end – we are looking for signs that this ending will happen – will the vaccinations be ready and

work quickly – will we be able to go Christmas shopping – will we be allowed to go back to the gym get our haircut – I'm sure you are all wondering will you be able to get back to church in time for Christmas?

In this passage from Mark – we are to be alert – and to look for signs in the context of a world in turmoil, at the time of this writing in Mark – a world utterly dominated by an Empire that wanted to destroy both Judaism and Christianity.

For us the key learning is that the spirit of these visions was that in the end it would all be OK; the point of these texts is to give hope.

In Advent we have a heightened sense of awareness that we live in a time of 'not yet'... as we light our advent wreath and bring light into the darkness – we are awake to the reality of life – the complications of the world and of our lives – we do not skip over the troubles but we become alert to what is – it is a season for opening our eyes a bit wider – to notice perhaps what we would rather shut our eyes to.

In that reality – we see that darkness overshadows for so many – and in these difficult times there is much darkness for so many of you – losing jobs, worrying about money, illness and grief, inability to visit our loved ones, isolation – there is a lot of darkness for so many people right now.

In Advent – we see the darkness and we also look for signs of God's hope and God's light – we light candles to actively remember what brings us light and hope in this complicated and difficult world. The Advent wreath will be lit – our first candle alight in defiant hope.



When we talk about 'Hope' we generally talk about not knowing but wishing something will happen – a Christian understanding of hope it seems to me is a bit different – it is being promised something and being confident in that – God gives us hope not as a mere wish – but as a promise – and in the darkest times – that gives us something very strong to cling to.

Whenever things feel tough for me - I remember the mystic Julian of Norwich who heard God's assuring words that: "all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well."

Complete hope that all will be well - that's what we can take from these readings today. A belief that "all will be well" is not to hand responsibility for everything over to God. Instead it gives us faith and hope that we, who are the body of Christ, can bring light into the darkness. That hope that all will be well is with us – we are the agents of hope.

Hope is only to be found in travelling through reality - It's not divorced from reality. It is grounded in us – it has to be. Hope indicates a willingness to be alongside

someone in their times of suffering and pain, and indeed of joy, as they navigate those times in their lives; a willingness to simply be there, sharing in their expectant waiting.

The Kingdom of God is already on its way, and we are called to be part of that - to bring light into the darkness and hope where there is despair.

Christians are often found among those aiding the wounded, burying the dead, and feeding the refugees. And when natural disaster strikes, Christian agencies are often the first to bring practical aid. Or when bereavement or disappointment happens, Christians can offer care and love, but also hope.

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This year, Advent and Christmas is different – we are looking – searching desperately for signs that we can have a new future – free from fear of a virus – liberated to be together and to live a life without restrictions.

I think a danger in all of this is our constant desire to look beyond what is now – to look for something that is to come instead of to see what we already have. The kingdom of God – we now understand – is present to us now - as well as for the past and for the future – and looking for signs of God's presence is what we are to do right here right now.

The same with these strange times - let us be more alert to the present – to notice the love and the hope we have right now instead of constantly looking beyond. Let us be alert to God's love and to see hope in what we do and what is around us – not denying the difficulties – but seeing those signs which bring light and life into our world right now.

"all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well."

Amen

Profession of Faith

Our faith holds us all – whoever we are, however we come to God:

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us with power from on high.**

**We believe in one
God; Father, Son
and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**



Prayers

Let us pray:

Loving God, as we begin the Season of Advent and focus on bringing light to our world, we pray for all places where darkness seems to reign. We pray with hope that the vaccines will be successful across the world. We pray with hope that our global neighbours will work together to bring healing to our world. We pray with hope that conflicts will be resolved and the suffering of war will cease. We pray with hope that all who live in fear or suffer under oppression will find the light of compassion and relief.

Amen. Come Lord Jesus

Loving God, as we get ready to return to worshipping together in our church building together help us to make the right decisions for our Advent and Christmas services to safeguard those in our church family as well as to reach out to those who desire to increase their faith, hope and love with us this Season. We pray that all of our community will experience the coming of hope to our world in Jesus in a new way this Christmas time. Help us as your people to welcome visitors to our church and spread your love in our streets.

Amen. Come Lord Jesus

Loving God, as we remember that we are to be alert for signs of the kingdom, may we notice all those in our community who need our love. We pray especially for those who are particularly isolated and lonely as we approach Christmas. Those for whom this season is filled with grief and gloom. Those who live in our parish who are struggling with financial hardship this year and are dreading Christmas. As we seek to play our part in bringing your Kingdom to our world, help us to find ways to bring light into the darkness.

Amen. Come Lord Jesus

Loving God, in this Season of Advent we remember those who are struggling in the shadows of sickness or sadness. We pray with hope of the light of your healing for all those who have asked for our prayers: *Kevin, Gwen, Marshall, Susan, Cherine, Karen, Paulette, Maureen and family, Pamela, Neil, Debbie, Elaine and family, Clinton, Francis, Cynthia, Diane, Harold, Ivy, Sean, Taneisha, Talabi, Susan, Sydney, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Ena and Stephen.* Wrap your arms of love around your children. May we find hope together.

Amen. Come Lord Jesus

Loving God, as we prepare to welcome your abundant love again this Christmas we remember all those who now live in eternal love, remembering especially those who have died recently – Elेशia; and all those in our hearts whose physical love we miss...

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord

And let light perpetual shine upon them

Merciful Father

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



The Prayer Jesus taught us

Rejoicing in God's new creation, we pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.**

The Peace

God is love and those who live in love live in God
and God lives in them.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Who could you share God's peace with?



Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

The God of all grace,
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,
establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;
and the blessing of God almighty,
Creator, Redeemer, and Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

The Dismissal

We go from here blessed for the journey that lies before us,
and strengthened for the challenges we may yet face.

Let us go in peace
to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ

Amen



Happy Birthday to all those who have birthdays!



Notices

- Services back in church next week – as before with masks and distancing for our safety.
- Izzy and Jon and family have been busy making an amazing Advent Calendar for our church – children (and big children) every day there will be new excitements behind the numbers on the doors.

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