

**The Rectorial Benefice of the East Vale
Morning Prayer
Sunday 29th November, 2020 | Advent I**

Hymn

**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.**

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Advent I: The Patriarchs

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors: to you be praise and glory for ever! You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment. May we be obedient to your call and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ, a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for you are our light and our salvation.

Blessed be God for ever.

God of Abraham and Sarah, and all the patriarchs of old, you are our Father too. Your love is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, son of God and son of David. Help us in preparing to celebrate his birth to make our hearts ready for your Holy Spirit to make his home among us. We ask this through Jesus Christ, the Light who is coming into the world. **Amen.**

**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 this Christmastide,
Be king of our lives today.**

The Collect

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

First Reading

(Isaiah 64.1-9)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence – as when fire kindles brush-wood 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.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

(Psalm 80.1-7)

R/ Turn us again, O God

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, you that led Jo-seph like a flock; Shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim, before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. **R/**

Stir up your mighty strength and come to our salvation. O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry at your people's prayer? **R/**

You feed them with the bread of tears; you give them abundance of tears to drink. You have made us the derision of our neighbours, and our enemies laugh us to scorn. Turn us again, O God; show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved. **R/**

Second Reading

(1 Corinthians 1.3-9)

A reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind – just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you – so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The Gospel

(Mark 13.24-37)

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give thanks to the risen Lord.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Give praise to his name.

God has proclaimed the just reward:

'Life for all men, alleluia!'

Alleluia! Alleluia!...

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Listen to the gospel of Christ according to Saint Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to Peter, James, John and Andrew, '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.

**Come, let us praise the living God,
joyfully sing to our Saviour.**

Alleluia! Alleluia!...

The Homily

Fr Martyn

Last week was Stir up Sunday when we traditionally prepared our Christmas Cakes or Christmas Puddings ready for the great celebration that lies ahead. Today is Advent Sunday when we start a New Christian Year. As we start this New Year we do so with some uncertainty and even fear. The pandemic has been with us for 9 months, although we can now see the light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel, with the vaccine about to be administered. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who are suffering or whose loved ones are isolated. We continue to pray for those who work in the front line dealing with the pandemic.

As we begin another Christian Year it is a good time to commit ourselves afresh, in challenging times, to follow the God whom we worship this morning. To remain faithful and to reach out to those in need. Isaiah tells us today that God is our Father. We are the clay, and he is the potter. We are the work of his hands and we are his people. The wonderful poetry of Isaiah reminds us that we are in relationship with the God whom we worship today. Psalm 80 reminds us that God gives us so much when we read 'Stir up your mighty strength and come to our salvation...O God show us the light of your countenance and we shall be saved.' In the epistle Paul says 'You are not lacking in any spiritual gift.... He will strengthen you to the end.... God is faithful.' As we face difficulty, sadness and uncertainty, we do not face these things alone, as God is with us as our constant companion. These are wonderful sentiments to embrace as we start another Christian Year and as we prepare to celebrate a Christmas unlike any that we have previously experienced.

The Liturgy of Lighting the Advent Candles focusses each week on individuals, or groups of people, who prepared the way for the coming of Christ. Today we have focussed

on the Patriarchs, such as Abraham and Sarah. Advent 2 will focus on the prophets, who prepared for the coming of the Saviour who would bring peace. Advent 3 will focus on John the Baptist, who prepared the people for the coming of the Lord and Baptised Him in the Jordan. Advent 4 will focus on the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose faithful obedience led to the birth of Christ. Finally, on Christmas Day will focus on Jesus Christ himself.

This Liturgy of Lighting the Advent Candles reminds us that we are part of the story. As each Sunday we recall those who prepared for the coming of Christ, so we have a part to play. At this time of year, we think of schools or churches preparing for Nativity Plays and Crib Services. We are part of the Nativity Story. We are part of the Crib Service. As each of those individuals or groups of people prepared for the coming of Christ, so Advent is a time when we can prepare to welcome Jesus afresh into our lives. We are called to celebrate a truly Christ centred Christmas and Advent Sunday marks the start of that time of preparation.

Our Gospel today reminds us that we are called to be prepared to follow Jesus and to be ready to follow him now. Chapter 13 tells us 'They will see the Son of Man coming with great power and glory... But about that day or hour no one knows... Be alert... Keep awake.' We are called to follow Jesus, to be prepared to follow Him now. We are often told that we should never put off what we can do today until tomorrow. In other words, we need to be ready to meet our maker, but also to reach out in love and forgiveness and service to all those who need us now, not at some vague time in the future.

Christmas may not be as we might Want it to be this year for all sorts of reasons. Our Christmas Worship will be different as well. Now we are still not allowed to sing in church, so it will be a case of Christmas without the Christmas Carols. We can sing at a Zoom Christmas Carol Service, or at a Zoom Crib Service, or outside safely carolling. In our church buildings it will be different. But we can still meet and worship. We can still celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not need to have to feel nostalgic in order to celebrate the event. The Christian faith is so much more than a warm glowing feeling, wonderful as that might be. I remember a couple of Christmases as a priest when I was not well enough to sing, which was very frustrating. But I still celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ, only in a different way. That is our challenge this year, to celebrate in a different, yet meaningful way. Let us use this season of Advent to help us to prepare for a truly Christ centred Christmas, always remembering that the one who was born at Bethlehem was the God who died on the cross of Calvary. The God of Love and Forgiveness and Service; he whom we are called to emulate.

Musical Reflection: 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' sung by Peterston Church Choir

Hymn

**Hark! a herald voice is calling;
'Christ is nigh,' it seems to say;
'Cast away the dreams of darkness,
O ye children of the day!'**

**Startled at the solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise;
Christ, her Sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.**

**Lo! the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from heaven;
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all to be forgiven;**

**So when next he comes in glory,
Wrapping all the earth in fear,
May he then as our defender
Of the clouds of heaven appear.**

**Honour, glory, virtue, merit,
To the Father and the Son,
With the co-eternal Spirit,
While unending ages run. Amen.**

The Intercessions

As we prepare for the coming of the Lord, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Make your church ever watchful to discern the signs of your will. Keep her firm and constant to the end; knowing that all her works are worth nothing without the blessing of your grace. We pray for June, our bishop, and for your blessing on the Christmas campaign for international aid in the parish of Lagunda, and on those who donate and arrange flowers in our churches.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Guide all in authority to act with wisdom and justice. Open their minds and direct their wills to look beyond short-sighted gains and solutions to the long term well-being and lasting good of all humanity.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

At this Advent time give us grace to serve by deed and example those who are close to us, our families, friends and neighbours, and those with whom we work. As we look towards the season of Christmas, may we remember with humility and gratitude the great love of the Father in sending the Son.

**Praise to the Incarnate Son,
who comes to set us free,
with Father and with Spirit one,
to all eternity.**

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Have mercy on all those who suffer, and relieve their distress. Come to those who are in darkness and help them to recognise the signs of light and hope by which their lives can be guided.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have known the coming of the Lord at the end of their lives. May he rest in the peace to which he has called them, and may we be ready for the hour we are called to be united with them.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

In a time of silence, we offer our own prayers to the Lord who is among us now and is yet to come again in glory...

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

Hymn

**The advent of our God
with eager prayers we greet,
and singing haste upon the road
his glorious gift to meet.**

**The everlasting Son
scorns not the Virgin's womb;
that we from bondage may be won
he bears a bondsman's doom.**

**Daughter of Zion, rise
to meet thy lowly King,
let not thy stubborn heart despise
the peace he comes to bring.**

**On clouds of dazzling light,
as judge he comes again,
his scattered people to unite
with him in heaven to reign.**

**Let evil flee away
ere that great hour shall dawn,
let this old Adam day by day
the new man all put on.**